

THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN THE FORMATION OF NATIONALISM,
TWO CASE STUDIES: TURKISH AND ARMENIAN NATIONALISMS

by

Ali Tekkoyun

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
The University of Utah
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

Middle East Studies / Political Science

Department of Languages and Literature

The University of Utah

May 2011

Copyright © Ali Tekkoyun 2011

All Rights Reserved

The University of Utah Graduate School

STATEMENT OF THESIS APPROVAL

The thesis of Ali Tekkoyun

has been approved by the following supervisory committee members:

<u>M. Hakan Yavuz</u>	, Chair	<u>10/27/2010</u> Date Approved
<u>Peter J. Sluglett</u>	, Member	<u>10/27/2010</u> Date Approved
<u>Bahman Baktiari</u>	, Member	<u>10/27/2010</u> Date Approved

and by Bahman Baktiari, Chair of
the Department of Languages and Literature

and by Charles A. Wight, Dean of The Graduate School.

ABSTRACT

Nationalism provides a rational framework for the formation of a national identity for societies by associating that identity with territory, religion, and/or language. This study takes the association of nationalism with religion into account in the Turkish and Armenian cases with the aim of providing a new perspective to the Armenian question. Instead of ignoring the economic and political reasons, this study seeks the role of religion in the conflict which witnessed violence and resulted in a service of tragedies.

Nationalism aiming at building an independence nation-state was a threat for the Ottoman Empire, which consisted of various ethnicities and religions. The Ottoman political and social formation was based on religious identities, which enabled its subjects to keep their ethnic identities, and these gained priority with the influence of nationalism. In order to prevent the dissolution of its *millets* into essentially national entities, the Ottoman administration tried various policies, namely, Ottomanism, Islamism, and Turkish nationalism, whose common element was to be Islam, which provided the social base and justified the arguments of the ideologies. It was Islam that motivated people to fight against *infidels* in order to defend the homeland (*vatan*).

The “self-isolation” process that began with the separation of the Armenian Church from the Greek Church in the fourth century transformed into an Armenian identity characterized by religious and ethnic attachments under the hegemony of foreign powers. In the context of the Armenian question, the Armenian Gregorian Church contributed to Armenian nationalism by transforming the historical attachments of

Armenian identity into nationalist discourses.

Religious motivation of people toward nationalistic goals by the religious leaders, such as Mkrdich Khrimian, a member of the Armenian clergy, can easily embrace violence by mobilizing people to sacrifice themselves. Violence has been unavoidable when the politicization of religions, namely Islam and Armenian Gregorian Orthodoxy, toward nationalistic goals takes a place in the same territory. In the context of the Armenian question, the role of religion needs to be examined within the framework of politicization with nationalist discourses, which will provide an understanding of the origins of the conflict and its tragic results.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vii
INTRODUCTION	1
THE ROLE OF ISLAM IN THE FORMATION OF TURKISH NATIONALISM.....	6
The Emergence of Turkish Nationalism	7
Ottomanism.....	7
Islamism.....	13
The Formation of Turkish Nationalism.....	15
The Young Turks and Turkish Nationalism	16
Turkish Nationalism as an Ideology: Akçura and Gökalp.....	19
The Characteristics of Turkish Nationalism.....	29
THE ROLE OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH IN THE FORMATION OF ARMENIAN NATIONALISM.....	33
Introduction: Characteristics of Armenian Nationalism	33
Historical Background.....	38
The Armenian Church and the Ottoman Armenians	38
Missionary Activities.....	40
The Eastern Policies of Russia and England.....	42
The Role of Religion in the Construction of Armenian Nationalism.....	44
A Case Study: the Example of Mkrdich Khrimian	50
Armenian Nationalism: Religious Nationalism or Ethnic Nationalism?	56
Conclusion.....	58
POLITICIZATION OF RELIGION	60
The Causes of the Emergence of Turkish and Armenian Nationalisms.....	62
The Characteristics of Turkish and Armenian Nationalisms	64
Identification of Ethnicity with Religion	71
Territorial Affiliation of Religion and Nationalism.....	75
Mobilization of Masses: Sacrifice Concept and Violence.....	78

CONCLUSION.....	84
APPENDIX.....	95
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	98

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to state my gratitude to all those persons who have contributed to the completion of this thesis. Special thanks to Prof. M. Hakan Yavuz, the Chairperson of the Committee, for his guidance, supports, and encouragement for this study. I thank the Committee members, Prof. Peter Sluglett and Prof. Bahman Baktiari, for their comments. Above all, a grateful thank to Prof. Sluglett for his contributions and concern.

There are other individuals I need to thank for their help. I sincerely thank to my friend, Ramazan Hakkı Öztan, for his revision, editing, and orientation; also thanks to Dr. Fikrettin Yavuz for providing a copy of his master's thesis and some other sources; Dr. Umut Uzer for his revision and comments; Yalın Keçeci for his editing and moral encouragement; Kris Phillips, Luke Lavin, and Todd McKay for their help in editing; Ayşenur Erken and Halil İbrahim Hançabay for providing sources from Turkey.

I would like to thank my family members for their moral encouragements. Finally, special thanks to my wife, *Tuğba*. In addition her taking care of our lovely children, *Mustafa Emir* and *Ahmet Halit*, she deserves very special thanks, which cannot be described with words, due to her incredible support, patience and time. I dedicate this study to her for her moral encouragement that facilitated the completion of this study.

INTRODUCTION

During the early decades of the twentieth century, Turkey witnessed the unfolding of several tragic events. Generally speaking, this era was one in which many state and nation-building processes began. One example was the events of 1915, which resulted in the deaths of millions of people of Turkish and Armenian descent throughout the territories of the Ottoman Empire. In this sense, the Ottoman decision to relocate the Armenians of Eastern Anatolia became an example of a process of nation-building. The facts of the case, however, have been largely ignored and manipulated by the official discourses of both of the national mythologies. In addition, scholarly examinations of the events have been suspected as being the ‘official version’ of one side or the other.¹ Most of the approaches of both sides to the Armenian question focus on the exact moment of the tragic events and ignore the larger social, political, economic, and/or religious origins and historical background of the events.

Culturally and territorially rooted in the regions of present-day Armenia and eastern Turkey, the Turkish, Kurdish, and Armenian peoples had shared the same lands, and had communicated with each other on social, economic, and cultural levels before and during Ottoman rule. In the arrangements collectively known as the *millet* system,

¹As examples of this kind of suspicion, see Kakizaki, Masaki “*Review Essay: Ethnic Cleansing or Genocide?*” *Middle East Critique*, (16: 1, 2007), 85-92; and also for the conclusion of the court case that Guenter Lewy filed against David Holthouse and the Southern Poverty Law Center, Inc. alleging that they wrote and published defamatory statements that caused him various injuries including reputational harm and emotional trauma, see <<https://ecf.dcd.uscourts.gov/cgi-bin/show_public_doc?2008cv1971-34>>

the Armenian *millet* enjoyed and kept its religious, cultural, economic and social relations within the Empire, and it was represented by the Armenian Patriarchate in Istanbul.

The French Revolution of 1789, which is regarded as a turning point in history, as it unleashed the forces of nationalism, also had a significant impact on the Ottoman Empire and its subjects. Nationalism gradually became the principal discourse first among the Christians of the Balkans and then, although very much later, of the Muslim Arabs. The dissolution of the Ottoman Empire into ethno-linguistic nation-states began in the Balkans in the late nineteenth century, and continued through other regions of the Empire in the first decades of the twentieth century. This may be explained by the region's geographical proximity to the West, the fatherland of nationalism, but Balkan nationalism was also sedulously encouraged by the Ottomans' neighbors, especially Tsarist Russia. In the much same way Armenian nationalism found relatively early acceptance in comparison to that of neighboring ethnicities since the Diaspora Armenians channeled Western thought into the Armenian homeland, in which national identity came to be a major characteristic of the way in which the Armenian Apostolic Church managed the socio-politic relations of its people.

In this study, I will demonstrate religion as an important component of Turkish and Armenian nationalism, as well as the role of religion within the conflict between the Ottoman Empire and the Armenians, rather than examining the numerical results of the tragedy. The purpose here is not to introduce a new theory on nationalism or identities, but to compare the process of formation of both Turkish and Armenian nationalism. While social, economic, and political reasons behind the events of 1915 are important to keep in mind, as many scholars continue to investigate and argue, the effects of the

politicization of religion must also be considered within the framework of the origins of violence, because the majority of the literature on the Armenian question lacks the necessary religious perspective that can be used to explain the role of religion as a crucial factor in the conflict. Thus, this study is an attempt to emphasize the religious characteristics of the Armenian question.

The first significant conflict between Armenians and the Ottoman Empire occurred in the second half of the nineteenth century, in which nationalist influence began to emerge elsewhere in the Ottoman Empire. Within the history of the Armenian people, ethnic identity was a dominant theme, like Jewish identity in which religion and ethnic identity found strength in the historic narratives of foreign domination and expulsion. As for the Muslim-Ottomans, Islam was the basis of their identity. While these separate identities did not result in clashes, with the emergence of nationalism as a political discourse, insistence on national identities led to increased societal tension. By taking this reality into account, I am attempting to demonstrate that the interaction between religious and nationalistic discourses as well as the mobilization of people based upon new concepts of identity and national boundaries, resulted in violence in a specific territory.

This study consists of three main chapters. Chapter I, *The Role of Islam in the Formation of Turkish Nationalism*, examines the formation process of Turkish nationalism since the *Tanzimat* Era (1839-1876) in which the first official identification of the Empire, partially a reconfiguration of imperial identity was applied. In the long aftermath of the French Revolution, the rearrangement of communities in terms of national identity gradually began to threaten the territorial integrity of the Ottoman

Empire. Since the *Tanzimat* period, the Ottoman government had carried out reforms on the basis of patriotic and religious ideology in order to try to maintain its territorial integrity. This chapter will examine the formation of Turkish nationalism by taking its particular characteristics, especially Islamic, into account. Thus, I will analyze the work of Yusuf Akçura (1876-1935) and Ziya Gökalp (1876-1924), the ideologues of Turkish nationalism. The purpose of the chapter is to investigate the three currents of thought (Ottomanism, Islamism, Turkish nationalism) in the late Ottoman period in terms of political and social constructs rather than as objective historical processes. By doing so, I argue, contrary to popular belief, that Turkish nationalism emerged as a continuation of Ottomanism and Islamism, rather than emerging as a separate ideology.

Chapter II, *The Role of the Armenian Church in the Formation of Armenian Nationalism*, examines Armenian nationalism and the role of religion in the formation of nationalism. It should be emphasized that Armenian history and historiography always stress a national/nationalist discourse. Many modern scholarly works dealing with Armenian history speak interestingly of the national awakening of the Armenians long before the politicization of national identities. These works can be identified as expressions of nationalism itself. There is a dominant theme of “self-isolation” in Armenian identity, which first emerged with the separation of the Armenians from the Greek Church in the fourth century (religious) and later the notion that the ‘Armenian nation’ was hemmed in and ruled by “others” (national). Looking at the subject of nationalism, I will examine its interaction with the Armenian Church through a case study, of the life and career of Mkrdich Khrimian (1820-1907), a prominent religious and political figure. I will then conclude Chapter II by displaying the strong impact of the

dual mission (i.e., religious and national) of the Armenian Church.

Chapter III, *The Politicization of Religion*, will evaluate the interaction of religion and nationalism, and its results by comparing the Turkish and Armenian cases. This chapter will argue that while there were already existing ethnic, religious, and cultural attachments and identities, certain conjunctures made these differences come together and cause a bloody tragedy in the twentieth century. In order to understand how people gravitated towards violence, I will examine the relationship between religion, nationalism, and violence.

CHAPTER I

THE ROLE OF ISLAM IN THE FORMATION OF TURKISH NATIONALISM

Turkish nationalism should be evaluated differently from the ideologies of the various nation-states that came into being in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Because of the unique structural and territorial characteristics of the Ottoman Empire, the roots of Turkish nationalism can be traced to imperial edicts, such as citizenship, which appealed to both Muslim and non-Muslim communities, and their loyalty to the Empire. Thus, the key elements of Turkish nationalism changed according to the changing circumstances of the Empire during and after the *Tanzimat* period. Homeland, religion, and nation, either together or separately, were emphasized by different ideologies which were “designated as the Islamic, the Ottoman, and the Turkish principles of identity” in order to save the Empire.²

In my view, Turkish nationalism is an ideology that evolved from, and was based on, Ottomanism and Islamism rather than an ideology that emerged from a separate category of ethnic Turkishness. The aim of the chapter is to demonstrate that through the politicization of Islam, the Ottoman administration intended to create a social and political base and furthermore, to sustain the unity of the Empire.

²Bernard Lewis, “The Ottoman Empire and Its Aftermath,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 15, No. 1, Imperial Hangovers (Jan., 1980), p. 27.

The Emergence of Turkish Nationalism

Ottomanism

In order to maintain social and political order in the face of growing nationalist sentiments among non-Muslim communities, mostly in the Balkans, the Ottoman administration implemented the *Hatt-ı Şerif* in 1839, and in 1856, the *Islahat* reforms. The *Tanzimat* era (1839-1876) brought Westernized institutions and regulations, which were generally liberal, secular, and constitutionalist. The emergence of secular courts and a secular educational system, together with the creation of a Western-style army and civil service were some of the most significant changes that *Tanzimat* brought to the public sphere.³ In addition to maintaining social order, the *Tanzimat* reforms aimed at creating a more centralized authority and a more functional government, which could resolve internal conflicts and provide security for all subjects and their property regardless of religion, achieving “political, social, and economic integration.”⁴ Thus, the slogan of the *Tanzimat* was the equality of all Ottoman subjects irrespective of religion or race, which was to be guaranteed by an Ottoman citizenship freely available to all inhabitants of the Empire.

The basic policy of the Empire at this time was the notion of Ottomanism, which was based on an Ottoman nation founded on equal rights.⁵ However, the liberal and secular regulations designed to create and strengthen the integrity of the Empire on the basis of Ottoman citizenship resulted in the national awakening of both non-Muslim and

³Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1962), 3.

⁴Kemal H. Karpat, *An Inquiry into the Social Foundations of Nationalism in the Ottoman State: From Social Estates to Classes, From Millets to Nations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973), 85

⁵*Ibid.*, 86.

Muslim communities, thus decreasing the integrity of the Empire itself. The extension of economic relations between Europe and the Ottoman Empire, the increase in missionary activities within the Empire, the effect of the ideas of the French Revolution on the Christian population, and the extension of the protection of the Christian subjects of the Empire on the part of the Great Powers did not allow the Empire to provide equality for all its citizens.⁶ These factors led the communities to demand extra privileges, including independence or their own constitutions,⁷ and eventually in many cases to rebel against the Empire.⁸ In addition to the national awakening of the various ethnic and religious communities, the authoritarian tendencies of the Ottoman government triggered the disintegration of the Empire.

Protesting against the government's promises of equality implied by the policy of Ottomanism, a secret group of elite bureaucrats came into being in 1865, calling itself *Ittihak-ı Hamiyyet* (the Patriotic Alliance).⁹ Şerif Mardin considers Ali Pasha, Fuad Pasha, Mehmed Bey, Namık Kemal, Ayetullah Bey, and Refik Bey as the founders of the organization, whose members would later be called the "Young Ottomans."¹⁰ Mardin states that they were equally concerned to have a profound "knowledge of European civilization and [...] at the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire," since almost all of them had worked at some stage in the Translation Bureau of the Porte, established in 1833.¹¹ Thus, their acquaintance with Western ideas allowed them to foresee the spread of nationalist ideas among the communities of the Empire. Their aim was "to follow the

⁶Mardin, *Genesis*, 14.

⁷Karpat, *An Inquiry*, 86-90; David Kushner, *The Rise of Turkish Nationalism 1876-1908* (London, Frank Cass, 1977), 4.

⁸For more information about the revolts see Mardin, *Genesis*, 17-19.

⁹Quoted in Mardin, *Genesis*, 20-21.

¹⁰For a detailed history of the Young Ottomans and their thought, see Mardin, *Genesis*.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 11-13.

political lead of Europe, though their intense patriotism made them think of reform for Ottomans, by Ottomans, and along Islamic lines.”¹²

Namık Kemal’s *Tasvir-i Efkar* (Description of Ideas) and Ali Suavi’s *Muhbir* (Monitor) were the functional organs of the organization that criticized the government’s implementation of the *Tanzimat*. The Cretan insurrection (1866-69) was to be one of the most significant events, enabling the Young Ottomans to express their power through a press that strongly criticized the government by emphasizing patriotic notions.¹³

In 1867, *Ittihak-i Hamiyyet* declared its program as a new organization under the name of New (or Young) Ottoman Society in Paris. The organization headed by Ziya Bey was composed of Mustafa Fazıl, Namık Kemal, Nuri, Suavi, Mehmed Bey, Reşad Bey, and Rifat Bey. Suavi’s journal *Muhbir* was originally the main organ of their society, but because of his dissatisfaction with *Muhbir*, Namık Kemal began to publish *Hürriyet* (Liberty) in 1868.¹⁴ The Young Ottomans not only published newspapers and journals, but also books, which played an important role in the delivery of ideas embellished with patriotic and Islamic elements.¹⁵ These publications, however, circulated solely among the bureaucratic elites, since the common people could not access the language and content of the press.

Among the Young Ottomans, Şinasi, Ziya Pasha, and Namık Kemal became the leaders of the movement because of their contributions “to attempt to develop a broad theoretical justification and an ideology for the emerging centralized modern institutions

¹²Ibid., 21.

¹³Ibid., 24-27.

¹⁴Ibid., 44-47.

¹⁵For more information on the journals, newspapers, and other publications of the Young Ottomans, see Mardin, *Genesis*, 45-70.

in terms of Islamic political tradition and Ottoman principles of government.”¹⁶ In spite of the *Tanzimat* reforms, new problems in administration, economy, and society emerged,¹⁷ and the Young Ottomans considered “political liberalization, constitutional checks on bureaucratic despotism and a parliamentary system” as suitable solutions.¹⁸

The centralization of the administration, made possible by the reforms, and the simultaneous weakening of the power of the ‘ulama increased the level of authoritarianism in the administration. The principle of equality resulted in failure because it required that the Muslim community should lose its predominance while other national communities, non-Muslims acquired extra privileges in social, political, and economic spheres such as the reforms made them able to have positions in bureaucracy and to serve in the army. The Young Ottomans’ opposition focused on these failures. For them, the main reason for the overall failure of the *Tanzimat* was the abandonment of Islamic principles in administration and in the policy of the state because “the doctrine of equality [...] proclaimed to be equal adherents of religions that were not equal.”¹⁹ Their goal was to reform the Ottoman Empire on the bases of Islamic principles and religious law with imported Western style institutions. The political theory of the Young Ottomans was derived from their interpretation of key terms of Islamic ‘political’ vocabulary.²⁰ The concepts of *Meşveret* and *Şura* (consultation and assembly) were the main concern of the

¹⁶Kemal H. Karpat, “The Transformation of the Ottoman State, 1789-1908” in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (Jul., 1972), 262.

¹⁷Karpat, “The Transformation,” 262-264.

¹⁸Ömer Taşpınar, *Kurdish Nationalism and Political Islam in Turkey: Kemalist Identity in Transition* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 42.

¹⁹Roderic H. Davison, “Turkish Attitudes Concerning Christian-Muslim Equality in the Nineteenth Century” in *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 59, No. 4 (Jul., 1954), 861.

²⁰For more a detailed examination, see Mardin, *Genesis*, 81-106. In this chapter Mardin examines “The Islamic Intellectual Heritage of the Young Ottomans.”

Young Ottomans in their political theory that required constitutionalism.²¹ They aimed to achieve harmony between Islamic principles and European ideas and institutions in administration. Thus, they examined Islamic sources to create an acceptable model for the Empire which was coherent with both Islamic and imperial origins.²² Finally, they came up with the idea of constitutionalism which aimed at checking the power of the Sultan through the ‘ulama and limiting his power with a constitution. Despite the trials of innovation in administration, since the Young Ottomans could not achieve mental transformation, the social transformation did not bring success for the adaption of institutions. As Weiker states, the constitution failed like the other projects, since the Young Ottomans could not integrate the ideas that necessarily went along with the Western institutions they were implementing in accordance with their understanding of classical Islamic doctrine.²³

To sum up, Ottomanism emerged as a counter ideology against what was regarded as Western inspired nationalism in order to keep the various ethnic elements under the rule of Empire by promoting citizenship based on equal rights regardless of race, ethnicity, and religion. The advocates of Ottomanism, the members of Young Turk organization, were, as Mardin describes them, the “bureaucratic intelligentsia,”²⁴ who were educated in the Translation Office and able to read the works of Western intellectuals. Ottomanism was the first trial of the Ottoman Empire to identify its subjects in a patriotic sense in order to create an Ottoman nation framed within Western notions of

²¹Karpat, “Transformation,” 262.

²²Walter F. Weiker, “The Ottoman Bureaucracy: Modernization and Reform” in *Administrative Science Quarterly* Vol. 13, No. 3, Special Issue on Organizations and Social Development, (Dec., 1968), 468.

²³Ibid., 469.

²⁴See Mardin, *Genesis*.

citizenship; however, it differed from Western nationalism(s) in terms of its emergence, goals, characteristics, and results. While the aim of western ideas of nationalism was the creation of an independent politically unified *nation-state*, the goal of Ottomanism was to maintain the integrity of both territory and the communities living on it irrespective of religion and ethnicity. Ottomanism was a movement that was advocated by the reformer intellectuals of the bureaucracy, namely, the Young Ottomans, who advocated their ideas through newspapers, journals, and books. They engraved Ottomanism with the religio-patriotic concepts of *vatan* (fatherland) and *hürriyet* (liberty) in their writings. However, their concept of liberty called for a government based on constitutional guidelines in order to check the authoritarian and despotic tendencies of the throne. Thus, Ottomanism remained an intellectual construct and never became a mass movement. In addition to low levels of literacy, the common people's lack of access to the outlets in which these ideas circulated explains the absence of strong public support and why the ideology did not become a mass movement. On the other hand, almost all the nationalist movements in the Balkans, and Armenian nationalism, owed their success to the combined support of the peasants, merchants, and clergy,²⁵ as will be discussed in Chapter 3. Also, the Church as an institution provided the necessary network within which the nationalist discourses could be conveyed to the people. Compared to Western nationalisms, the significant deficiency of Ottomanism was that it remained an intellectual movement. The reasons for the failure of Ottomanism can be found in the social, political, educational, and economic

²⁵Karpat analyzes the transformation of the Christian Millets, namely, Greeks, Serbians, Bulgarians, and Armenians, that resulted in emergence of nation states. For detailed information see Karpat, *An Inquiry*, 57-93.

spheres.²⁶ While these spheres in Western nations had functioned in collaboration during the emergence of national consciousness, the Ottoman Empire had just begun to develop its economic, social, and political transformation towards some sort of nationalist vision in the late nineteenth century as a “self-defensive reaction.”²⁷ Although the independence of the Balkan nations caused Ottomanism to end ideologically, the Islamic heritage of Ottomanism led Islamism and its central component the *Ummah*, to emerge as an alternative nation-building project.

Islamism

After the failure of Ottomanism, Abdulhamid II (1876-1908) implemented a new ideology, called Islamism or pan-Islamism based on national identification and unity between Ottoman Muslims and Muslims throughout the world. There were several reasons for Abdulhamid II to launch this project of unification of Muslims. After the Russian War (1877-1878) and the 1878 Berlin Treaty, which concluded with the independence of Romania, Serbia, and Montenegro, as well as the declaring of a semi-autonomous Bulgaria, many Muslims living within these former Ottoman territories, relocated to the Ottoman Empire. The non-Muslims on the other hand, relocated to the newly independent states.²⁸ Abdulhamid began to implement Islamism as a two-part initiative. The first part was internal and was meant to prevent the rising of national consciousness among the Muslim population living in mainland Anatolia, as well as those living in the remaining Ottoman territories of the Balkans. As Karpát states, this

²⁶Weiker, “The Ottoman Bureaucracy,” 469.

²⁷Karpát, *An Inquiry*, 115.

²⁸Kemal H. Karpát, *The Politicization of Islam: Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith, and Community in the Late Ottoman State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 148.

emphasis “allowed the ruling bureaucracy to retain the loyalty of the Arabs by stressing the Islamic character of the state.”²⁹ The second part was external, and was aimed at gaining the support of Muslims living outside the empire. From North Africa to Japan, Abdulhamid furthered pan-Islamism by emphasizing his dual position of Caliph and Sultan by ruling that all sermons were to be read in his name. Traditionally, the definition of Caliph called for the protection of holy cities of Islam and the security of the *hajj* roads, Abdulhamid’s decision to include “the worldwide defense of Islam and of the religious rights of Muslims living under foreign occupation”³⁰ became part of this definition. Thus he enlarged the borders of unification of all Muslim peoples from Africa to the Far East,³¹ who were suffering from the effects of Western imperialism and colonialism. It is worth mentioning that Abdulhamid’s efforts, to unify Muslims under his dual role as Caliph and Sultan, had not been used as a political tool for many centuries.³²

As discussed previously, the Young Ottomans’ criticism of the *Tanzimat* reforms was focused primarily on the Western leanings of the reforms, which they considered were not compatible with the Empire’s *millet* order. According to the Young Ottomans, the new national policy was to be based on Ottoman-Muslim identity (which was itself based on Islamic principles), the cultural and historical heritage of the Empire, and the protection of non-Muslims according to *Sharia*.³³ While the ideology of Islamism conducted by Abdulhamid II was anti-Western, the theme of the ideology was shaped according to European nationalistic characteristics, such as homeland, in a wider attempt

²⁹Karpat, *An Inquiry*, 107.

³⁰Karpat, *Politicization*, 243.

³¹*Ibid.*, 232.

³²Hasan Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire 1908-1918* (Berkeley: University of California, 1997), 31.

³³Karpat, *An Inquiry*, 106.

to hold the Empire together.

After the loss of parts of Balkans as a result of the Berlin Treaty, the Empire's main concern became that of securing its mainland and its territories. It is within this context, that of the non-Muslim groups, that the Armenians began to express separatist tendencies due to the exclusionary politics of Islamism. Islamic unification alone was not sufficient enough to keep social integrity among the Ottoman Muslims, and in the early twentieth century, growing social differentiation in terms of economic class formation and the diversification of language, used both in the official and public spheres, began to cause the emergence of ethnic and separatist sentiments, even among the Muslim population of the Empire.³⁴

Because of its religious basis, Islamism, unlike Ottomanism, appealed to the common people of the Empire, most of who were Muslim. However, the hegemony of the foreign powers over the Muslim societies, such as in India, caused the failure of worldwide Muslim unity, or pan-Islamism. The end of Islamism came in 1908 with the Young Turks' seizure of the administration and the ousting of Abdulhamid, whose reign was considered widely as absolutist. In addition to the Young Turks, the opposition to Abdulhamid's regime included numerous secret and overt societies and organizations, but it was the Young Turks who were more united, more widespread, and displayed the strongest opposition.

The Formation of Turkish Nationalism

The 1908 overthrow of Abdulhamid II by the CUP (the Committee of Union and Progress) opened a new page in the history of the Ottoman Empire. As nationalism

³⁴Ibid., 109-110.

became more widespread in Europe, the Empire first tried to keep its territorial integrity by re-identifying its peoples and then exerting efforts to maintain and to strengthen its power. After the French Revolution, Ottoman intellectuals who became familiar with Western ideas conducted a comprehensive national identification on the basis of Ottoman citizenship by emphasizing the Ottoman Empire as homeland. In the Balkans however, European nationalism prevailed over Ottomanism. As Mardin argues, the failure of Ottomanism “made the Young Turks* later turn to a form of Pan-Islamism, but the term ‘Turk’ had nevertheless acquired a certain legitimacy in the ruling circles even in their times.”³⁵

The Young Turks and Turkish Nationalism

The detailed works of M. Ş. Hanioglu, F. Ahmad, K. H. Karpat, and Ş. Mardin have provided a detailed history of the Young Turk movement.³⁶ Before its existence as a political organization, the CUP was established in 1889 under the name of *İttihad-ı Osmanlı Cemiyeti* (Society of Ottoman Unity) by four students of the Royal Medical School in Istanbul, Abdullah Cevdet, İbrahim Temo, İshak Sukuti, and Çerkez Mehmet Reşit.³⁷ This organization was secretive in nature and would be the nucleus of the Young

*Even the use of the term “Young Turks” is vague, Mardin here uses the term instead of Young Ottomans.

³⁵Şerif Mardin, *Ethnocentrism, Islam and the Development of Turkish Nationalism* (Ankara: Monograph, 1966), 17.

³⁶See for detailed studies on the genesis of the Young Turk movement M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *The Young Turks in Opposition*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Feroz Ahmad, *The Young Turks* (Great Britain: Oxford University Press, 1969); Kemal H. Karpat, *Politicization of Islam*; Şerif Mardin, *The Continuity and Change in the Ideas of the Young Turks*, Istanbul: Robert College School of Administration and Economics, 1969; and Şerif Mardin, “19. yy’da Düşünce Akımları ve Osmanlı Devleti (Ideologies and the Ottoman State in the 19th Century),” *Tanzimat’tan Günümüze Türkiye Ansiklopedisi (The Encyclopedia of Turkey: from Tanzimat to Present)*, Vol. 2, Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1985.

³⁷The first two names are extensively given as the founders/leaders of the organization. See Karpat, *Politicization*, 354; Hanioglu, *Young Turks*, 18. However, Zürcher and Ramsaur also mention the last two names as the founders of the movement. See Erik Jan Zürcher, *The Unionist Factor: The Role of the Committee of Union and Progress in the Turkish National Movement, 1905-1926* (The Netherlands: E. J.

Turk movement.³⁸

The Young Turk movement was established on the basis of positivist ideas led by Abdullah Cevdet and İbrahim Temo, and its ideology “was originally ‘scientific,’ materialist, social Darwinist, elitist, and vehemently antireligious;”³⁹ and its transition to the political level had been achieved by its successful interaction and alliance with the various opposition groups to the Abdulhamid regime. This transition however caused the original Young Turk ideology to “lose its purity.”⁴⁰

In the years following the formation of the CUP, the movement experienced several transformations both within its ideology and among its members. Hanioglu mentions the relationship of the Young Turk movement with other opposition groups such as the Freemasons, Le Parti Constitutionnel en Turquie, Le Comité Turco-Syrien, *Cemiyet-i İlmîye* (the Society of the ‘Ulama), and high-ranking officials and governors.⁴¹ The relationship between the Young Turk movement and other opposition groups vis-à-vis the Abdulhamid regime demonstrated the desire of Young Turks to be involved in Ottoman politics.

Because its founding members were from various ethnic backgrounds, Abdullah Cevdet a Kurd, and İbrahim Temo an Albanian,⁴² Turkish ethnic identification was not the defining element of the CUP. Hanioglu points to this controversy by stating that “none of the founders of the CUP was of Turkish origin, and they represented the

Brill, 1984), 13; Ernest Edmondson Ramsaur, *The Young Turks: Prelude to the Revolution of 1908* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957), 15.

³⁸Hanioglu, *Young Turks*, 3.

³⁹Ibid., 32.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹For detailed information, see Hanioglu, 33-70. Also, a specific study about the relationship between the Young Turk movement and Freemasons, see Hanioglu, “Notes on the Young Turks and the Freemasons, 1875-1908” *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (Apr., 1989), 186-197.

⁴²Karpat, *Politicization*, 354.

important Muslim groups in which a strong sense of nationalism was yet to develop—Albanians, Kurds, and Circassians,” which reaffirms my earlier point on the lack of ethnic substance in the construction of Turkishness.⁴³

The founding members’ relationships with their ethnic groups, in addition to the increasing number of Turks in the movement, caused the emergence of internal opposition.⁴⁴ As a result of this internal opposition and in order to avoid the potential for increased ethnic fragmentation, the Young Turks organized a meeting known as the First Congress of Ottoman Opposition in Paris in 1902. Although the decisions made at the meeting put an end to the original structures of the CUP, some elements within the movement remained operating under the existing organizational frameworks, using the party’s name, operating as well, within a different ideology than that of the original CUP.⁴⁵ According to Hanioglu, the role of this meeting is “pivotal in the history of the CUP” and its actions caused deep fractures among the members as well as within the ideology of the organization.⁴⁶ At the Congress, the two opposing wings of the CUP, debated the necessity of foreign intervention. The first group was the majority, and consisted of Turks, Armenians, Albanians, and Greeks, all of whom identified with their respective ethnicities. The composition of the minority group, which was led by Ahmed Rıza (1859-1930), a Kurd, was primarily Muslim.⁴⁷ Because of the conflicting approaches, political expectations, and differing ethnic identities, the Young Turk movement could not present a systematic ideology of Turkish nationalism, and the

⁴³Hanioglu, *The Young Turks*, 168.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 169.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 172.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 173.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 198.

meeting resulted in the disintegration of the CUP and in the emergence of an allied organization consisting of two groups, Turkish nationalists and Ahmed Rıza's group, which would keep the control of the Young Turk movement.⁴⁸

Given these internal conditions and in order to find a suitable solution for the survival of the Empire, Yusuf Akçura developed a systematical way to approach Turkish nationalism by comparing and contrasting Ottomanism and Islamism in a sense similar to that of European nationalism.

Turkish Nationalism as an Ideology: Akçura and Gökalt

Turkish nationalism emerged not from a single stream, but from the various factions within the Young Turk Movement. As mentioned above, even the early structure of the Young Turk movement consisted of various ethnic members, including Albanians, Kurds, Circassians, as well as different organizations and groups that had contradictory world-views. When the movement became a nationalist current, it gained support from other Turkish factions, namely Azeris and Tatars. Although Ahmet Ağaoğlu, an Azeri, contributed greatly to Turkish nationalism, it was the Tatar faction led by İsmail Gaspiralı and Yusuf Akçura, that played the major role, not only in the emergence of the Turkish nationalism, but also in the development of Turkish intellectuality.

In order to find the most appropriate policy for the Empire, given circumstances, Akçura compared and contrasted between Ottomanism, Islamism, and Turkism in terms of their weaknesses and strengths, within the framework of Turkish nationalism, and as a solution for the Empire.⁴⁹ What made Akçura important in the construction of Turkish

⁴⁸Ibid., 199.

⁴⁹Yusuf Akçura, *Üç Tarz-ı Siyaset (Three Ways of Politics)*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1976), 35.

nationalism was his call for the establishment of national consciousness.⁵⁰ Because Akçura remained between Islamism and Turkish nationalism, his *Three Ways of Politics* should not be seen as the manifesto of Turkish nationalism; instead, it was a first attempt at a systematic creation of Turkish nationalism on the political rather than on the scientific level.

Although Akçura stressed the strong points of Ottomanism, such as the ability of the Empire to maintain its *millet* system and its territory under one rule, he mentioned five reasons for the failure of Ottomanism. While he considered Ottomanism as a type of melting pot, Akçura claimed that it would fail under its promise to grant all Ottoman subjects equal rights and representation. Granting equal citizenship to all Ottoman subjects, specifically in the Balkans, was also discouraged by Russia, as it would eliminate the non-Muslim communities' dependence on Russia and lead to the loss of Russian access to specific trade routes over the Mediterranean Sea. Equal citizenship was also discouraged by other European Christian countries, out of fear that they would lose their connections and authority over the Ottoman Christian communities.⁵¹

Although Islamism was intended to unify Muslims across the world under the Ottoman Caliph, Akçura outlined its strengths and weaknesses pertaining to the continuation of the Empire. Akçura considered Abdulhamid's Islamism as a leading cause of friction between the various Muslim and non-Muslim peoples, as well as between Turkish Muslims and non-Muslim Turks.⁵² Furthermore, the unification of

⁵⁰See Niyazi Berkes, "Introduction" in Ziya Gökalp, *Turkish Nationalism and Western Civilization: Selected Essays of Ziya Gökalp*, translated and edited by Niyazi Berkes, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), 20.

⁵¹Akçura, *Üç Tarz-ı Siyaset*, 28-31.

⁵²*Ibid.*, 31.

Muslims did not necessarily constitute religious harmony, as history has revealed the existence of conflicts even among the different sects of Islam.⁵³ While Akçura believed that Islam could overcome this problem by confronting external obstacles, such as European imperialism and colonialism, he did not foresee any chance for confronting Europe successfully under the given circumstances.⁵⁴

In his final examination, Akçura suggested Turkism, under Ottoman auspices, as the ideal method of establishing nationhood, as it would unify all Turkish and Turkified Muslims of the Empire, as well as the Turkish population living in Central Asia and Russia.⁵⁵ Akçura predicted, however, that Turkish unification would result in the ostracism of the non-Turk and non-*Turkifiable* Muslim elements within the Turkish Muslim communities, but because the majority of Turkish population was already Muslim, the problem could be ignored. Through a reinterpretation of Islam, which would allow Muslims to identify themselves based on their national identities, as Christians had done in Russia, Germany, England, and some other European countries, Islam could provide a common base for the unification of Turks.⁵⁶

An important component of Akçura's examination was the social role of Islam in the formation of national identity in Turkish society. According to Akçura, even though religions have been a less important factor in the formation of political units, they have played a crucial role in the socialization of people. Since the majority of the Turkish population is Muslim, Akçura argued, Islam would be the uniting element and would be

⁵³Ibid., 32.

⁵⁴Ibid., 33.

⁵⁵Ibid., 33.

⁵⁶Akçura associates the sects of Christianity with different countries to support his idea on the necessity of the cooperation of religion and race by matching Orthodoxy with Russia, Protestantism with Germany, Anglo-Saxonism with England, and Catholicism with other countries. Ibid., 34-35.

the most important element in the formation of Turkish nation-state.⁵⁷ In order for this unification to occur, however, Islam would have to be reinterpreted as a receptor of nationalism.

In Akçura's reinterpretation of Islam, races have supplanted the position of religions in social and political spheres, and furthermore, religion had become more individualistic. In order for religions to maintain their power within society, as Christianity had done, "religions could save their social and political importance by integrating with races, and by helping and serving races."⁵⁸

In addition to his *Three Ways of Politics*, Akçura published articles in many journals and newspapers. He also founded organizations such as Turkish Hearth and Turkish Society, which advocated Turkish nationalism through his journal, Turkish Homeland.⁵⁹ In his writings, he advocated the simplification of the Turkish language, the spread of national culture, and the rewriting of Turkish history in order to create national consciousness. For example, his criticism of the newspaper *Türk* was based on what he perceived to be its limited understanding of national history. It was Akçura's belief that Turkish national history should not be limited to the Ottoman Empire, but should include the early Turkish states and their heroes such as Oğuz, Cengiz, Timur, etc.⁶⁰

Although there was an ongoing development of a Turkish national consciousness with racist tendencies, inspired by positivism, and a rejection of religious and cultural elements of the society, Akçura was the first intellectual to frame Turkish nationalism as

⁵⁷Ibid., 34.

⁵⁸Ibid., 35.

⁵⁹For detailed information about the journals in the Young Turk Era, see Masami Arai, *Turkish Nationalism in the Young Turk Era* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992).

⁶⁰Akçura, *Three Ways*, 35.

political project, reproducing and explaining nationalistic terminology more effectively than Namık Kemal did,⁶¹ and because the Young Ottomans, Islamists, and Akçura saw Islam as the common ground for their ideologies, their ideas often overlap.

Having been a member of the oppressed Muslim Kazan Tatars of the Russian Empire, led Akçura to believe that territory, religion, and ethnicity could be combined in the creation of a national identity. In what Yavuz calls the “trinity” of “Islamic identity, ethnicity, and territoriality” were shaped by the “external challenges and internal developments” of the Russian Empire.⁶² Islam however, was the central component of this trinity since it fed on nationalistic and territorial symbols.⁶³

Because Akçura’s impact on the formation of Turkish nationalism can be found in the context of the modern Turkish state, the state emerged on the basis of Islamic identity, integrated with Turkish ethnicity and territory, and blessed with Islamic symbols such as *vatan*. In effect, I would say that Akçura produced an eclectic ideology derived from Ottomanism, Islamism, and Turkism. By advocating the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire, he admitted the failure of Ottomanism as a political movement, while remaining between Islamism and Turkish nationalism.

In addition to Akçura’s contribution to the development of Turkish nationalism, Ziya Gökalp (1876-1924), who labeled his ideology as “a modern Islamic Turkishness,”⁶⁴ exposed the manifesto and theory of Turkish nationalism. Because his educational

⁶¹M. Hakan Yavuz, “Nationalism and Islam: Yusuf Akçura and ÜçTarz-ı Siyaset.” *Journal of Islamic Studies* 4, No: 2, (1993), 198.

⁶²Ibid, 194.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Gökalp, *Türkleşmek, İslamlaşmak, Muasırlaşmak (To Become Turk, Muslim, Civilized)*, (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1976), 12.

background was both religious and Western, his intellectual life was deeply profound.⁶⁵ Gökalp read Gabriel Tarde, a French sociologist, who Hilmi Ziya Ülken attributes as Gökalp's greatest influence. Ülken describes Gökalp as one of the intellectuals who combined the major currents (Ottomanism, Islamism, and Turkism) and produced a nationalistic view suitable for the Empire.⁶⁶ As a sociologist, Gökalp was able to read the reactions of the masses, and his knowledge of both classical Islamic teachings and philosophy as well as his knowledge of Western-based positivist sciences and philosophy, and the social results of current political discourses, led him to form an appropriate understanding of nationalism.

According to Wyndham Deedes, Gökalp “was one, perhaps the most influential, of the spiritual founders of the Turkish Republic,”⁶⁷ and his contributions to Turkish nationalism included a simplification of the Turkish language, the stress on the social role of Islam for the mobilization and motivation of the masses toward ethno-cultural nationalism, an emphasis on Turkish history, culture, literature, and art through mass education, and the attempt to create a national economy.

At this point it is necessary to discuss some of the core elements of Gökalp's ideology. In Gökalp's terminology, the most important concepts are nation (*millet*), culture (*hars*), and civilization (*medeniyet*).* Nation, as defined by Gökalp, did not constitute a group of people defined by racial, tribal, geographical, political, or volitional attributes, rather he defined nation as a group of people who share a common language,

⁶⁵For a detailed study of Gökalp's early life and ideas in Istanbul and then in Diyarbakır, see Hilmi Ziya Ülken, *Türkiyede Çağdaş Düşünce Tarihi (The History of Modern Thought in Turkey)*, Vol. II/II (Konya: SelçukYayımları, 1966), 493-543 and 584-614.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, 493.

⁶⁷Uriel Heyd, *Foundations of Turkish Nationalism: the Life of ZiyaGökalp*, (London: Luzac, 1950), vii.

**Hars*, for Gökalp, means national culture. By differing the terms *hars* and *civilization*, Gökalp puts emphasis on the place of the national culture in the whole of civilization.

belief/religion, ethics, and aesthetics, in other words, a society of which members have received the same *terbiye** (education or cultivation).⁶⁸

In order to explain culture, Gökalp used two different concepts: *hars* and *medeniyet*, and discussed their commonalities, which included all social aspects of life, namely, religion, ethics, law, philosophy, aesthetics, economy, language, and science. The differentiation between *hars* and *medeniyet* is that while *hars* means a national unity of cultural elements, *medeniyet* refers to an international dimension of culture.⁶⁹ As an example, while each European nation has its own culture, these nations constitute a Western civilization characterized by a transcendental culture. According to this definition, Gökalp defines Turkish culture in terms of its essence, a Turkish nation that is also a member of an Islamic civilization, contributing to and receiving from the cultural interaction of this civilization. For example, while the Turkish language is strictly the product of Turkish culture, the Ottoman language, the official language of the Ottoman Empire, is a reflection of the languages of Islamic civilization, i.e., Turkish, Arabic, and Persian.⁷⁰

Gökalp's ideology stressed *hars* as a national element and *medeniyet* as a universal element. In order to create the ideology of a Turkish nation-state, he emphasized

**Terbiye* is a Turkish word derived from Arabic meaning *education* or/and *cultivation* in the current Turkish language. However, *terbiye* in Gökalp's writing refers three aspects of both education and cultivation. By *terbiye* Gökalp means education that is based on national, religious, and contemporary knowledge. *Terbiye*, for Gökalp, aims to succeed three main results: being a Turk, being a Muslim, and being a modern. It is important that the concept *terbiye* exactly refers Gökalp's understanding of nation which is based on religious, cultural, and aesthetic elements that are filtered or monopolized by a governing power. For further discussion, see Gökalp, Gökalp, *Türkleşmek, İslamlaşmak, Muasırlaşmak (To Become Turk, Muslim, Civilized)*, (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1976).

⁶⁸Ziya Gökalp, *Türkçülüğün Esasları (The Principles of Turkism)*, (Istanbul: Varlık Yayınları, 5th edn., 1963), 16.

⁶⁹Ibid., 21.

⁷⁰Ibid., 22.

hars as an embodiment of the Turkish language, culture, history, and the nationalist version of Islam. For Gökalp, the most important element of *hars* was language, which, as he claimed, allowed people to make connections with others and with their own culture. In the case of the Turkish language, however, it was divided between the public and elite spheres, and further divided, as its spoken and written forms were entirely different from each other. While the spoken version was used in the public sphere by all sections of society, the written version, *Osmanlı Türkçesi* (Ottoman Turkish), was used specifically among the elite. For Gökalp, the simplification and generalization of the spoken language was necessary to achieve this effect, because conveying the ideology of nationalism to the public was critical.⁷¹

As a sociologist influenced by the French thinkers Fouillée, Tarde, Le Bon, and Durkheim,⁷² Gökalp was able to envision a Turkish nation-state along the lines of rationalist thinking, in which culture, language, and history were essential elements for social unity and national reawakening. In order to extend social unity to national unity, Gökalp stressed religion as an integral component. Gökalp, like Akçura, considered religion as the social base in the development of a single national attachment. Because of existing and intertwined connections between Islam and the cultural, social, and daily lives of Turks, Gökalp believed that Islam would remain as the core element of Turkish nationalism.

While Gökalp's ideology was shaped by Western thinkers, he was also influenced by Sufism, namely the *Nakşibendi* school, and he read classical Islamic philosophers and thinkers such as al-Ghazali, Ibn Sina, Farabi, Ibn Rushd, Ibn 'Arabi, and Jalal ud-Din

⁷¹Ibid., 77-95.

⁷²Heyd, *Foundations*, 32.

Rumi.⁷³ Gökalp's intellectual duality, consisting of Western and Eastern thought, gave him a modern understanding of Islam. While historically, Muslims could self identify only along the lines of their faith, rather than their ethnicity, Gökalp believed that Muslims could identify with their nationalities, making religion compatible with nationalism, not only with Turkish nationalism, but with all nations of Islam.⁷⁴ In order to demonstrate this compatibility, he recalled from the Quran "in God all people have a guide"⁷⁵ and "we have made you into nations and tribes, so that you might come to know one another."⁷⁶ By referring to these verses, Gökalp advocated nationalism as a means of preserving the religious and national identities of Muslim people, as well their social independences.⁷⁷

Gökalp's approach to nationalism was two-fold. First, he described nationalism as "social yeast" that caused people to rise, resulting in the disintegration of nations.⁷⁸ According to Gökalp, the concept of nationality gave rise to national consciousnesses separate from that of the Empire. In his second approach, Gökalp described nationalism as a "weapon" used for the development of the Islamic world.⁷⁹ In Gökalp's rationale, by gaining national consciousness, non-Muslim communities within the Ottoman Empire had acquired their independence; therefore, Muslim communities under the rule of non-Muslim governments elsewhere should also strive to achieve an Islamic identity through the same means in order to achieve worldwide unity.

⁷³Ibid, 23.

⁷⁴Gökalp, *Türkleşmek*, 99.

⁷⁵Qur'an, 13:7. For the translation see Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an* (Istanbul: İşaret Yayınları, 2006).

⁷⁶Qur'an, 49:13. For the translation see Asad, *Message*.

⁷⁷Gökalp, *Türkleşmek*, 97-98.

⁷⁸Ibid., 95.

⁷⁹Ibid., 96.

While Gökâlp stressed the importance of language in the development of national consciousness, he also stressed language as the means of obtaining political independence.⁸⁰ Language, according to Gökâlp, was a key to national literature, history, and culture, and he advocated the vernacularization of religious language. In his *Programme of Turkism*, he discussed “religious Turkism” by putting emphasis on the Turkification of prayers.⁸¹

Gökâlp attributed the backwardness of the Empire to the failures of governmental administrators to understand the importance of nationality,⁸² and insisted that the Empire could rise to the same level as that of modern Western societies. In order to reach the level of the West, Gökâlp emphasized the necessity of modernization and nationalization of institutions, a revival of national art, a reawakening of national history and culture, a reformation of education with national leanings, a modern reinterpretation of Islam, and the nationalization of the economy.

Gökâlp defined Turkish nationalism in terms of language and Islam, and furthermore, it was not based on ethnicity, but it was cultural and voluntary. According to Gökâlp, any individual living within Turkish society was to be considered a Turk regardless of ethnic origin.⁸³ Gökâlp believed that this transformation would be gradual, and would succeed by educating the masses with a nationalized program,⁸⁴ through creating a middle-class,⁸⁵ and adopting industrialization.⁸⁶ And while Gökâlp argued that

⁸⁰Ibid., 97.

⁸¹Gökâlp, *Türkçülüğün Esasları*, 118-119.

⁸²Gökâlp, *Türkleşmek*, 95.

⁸³Gökâlp, *Türkçülüğün Esasları*, 16.

⁸⁴Ibid., 31-35.

⁸⁵Gökâlp, *Türkleşmek*, 6.

⁸⁶Gökâlp, *Türkçülüğün Esasları*, 43.

to finalize this transformation required cooperation with Western civilization,⁸⁷ this cooperation was to remain limited in terms of science and technology.⁸⁸

The Characteristics of Turkish Nationalism

Akçura and Gökalp were the most important figures in the formation and development of Turkish nationalism, and their first concern was Turkification and the purification of language. In his efforts to purify the language, Gökalp contributed publications containing Turkish syntax, grammar, and original vocabulary.⁸⁹ Both men believed that language was the best way to transform the common people in a broader effort to revive national consciousness. Both men also believed that an emphasis on Turkish culture and history was an integral component in forming a national consciousness.

Because Akçura and Gökalp were concerned that a new nationally identified state could be based on Islam, they both claimed that Islam and nationalism supported to each other. While Akçura referred to Afghani's ideas that nationalism could help Islam thrive,⁹⁰ Gökalp derived the compatibility of Islam and nationalism from the Quran. For Akçura, Islam was the root of identity, ethnicity, and territoriality.⁹¹ For Gökalp, this formulation was "a modern Islamic Turkishness."⁹² Although Akçura and Gökalp's ideas of nationalism were based in part on Islam, both men called for a secular state in which even the religious language was reformulated into that of the vernacular.

⁸⁷Ibid.

⁸⁸Gökalp, *Türkleşmek*, 12.

⁸⁹For detailed information see, Gökalp *Türkçülüğün Esasları*, 77-98; Gökalp, *Türkleşmek*, 14-19.

⁹⁰Yavuz, "Nationalism and Islam," 189.

⁹¹Ibid., 195.

⁹²Gökalp, *Türkleşmek*, 12.

Although attempts were made to spread the ideology of nationalism among the common people, the arguments and discussions about Turkish nationalism and its place in society remained limited to the elites and literati.⁹³ And while there was an increase in the number of publications, journals, and newspapers, there was no significant evidence that they reached the common people. Even after the declaration of the Turkish Republic in 1923, the records of the *Türk Ocakları* (Turkish Hearths) meetings in 1924 reveal that the main points of Turkish nationalism, such as the limits and coverage of Turkish identity and the ways of reaching the common people, were not finalized and remained open to discussion.

The different approaches and understandings of nationalism which emerged after the Balkan Wars (1912-13) played a role in the diversification of the Young Turk movement. There existed three main ideological streams within the movement. The “Unionists,” an offshoot of the CUP, embraced positivist thought. The second group, led by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, consisted of former “Unionists” who came from the military and civil bureaucracy. The third group was composed of members of the Ottomanist ‘ulama and liberal government officials from Istanbul, all of which were opponents of the nationalists and Unionists and believed that Ottoman society was obligated to support the sultan-caliph.⁹⁴

While there was no agreement on the exact definition of Turkish nationalism, which would have provided the necessary ideological basis for mobilizing and motivating the population to fight for Turkey against its perceived enemies, mainly during WWI and

⁹³Hanioğlu, M. Şükrü. “Turkism and the Young Turks, 1889-1908,” in *Turkey beyond Nationalism: Toward Post-Nationalist Identities*, ed. Hans-Lukas Kieser, (London & New York: I. B. Tauris, 2006), 4.

⁹⁴Nazım İrem, “Turkish Conservative Modernism: Birth of a Nationalist Quest for Cultural Renewal,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (Feb., 2002), 94.

the subsequent War of Independence, there remains the question of what mobilized the diverse ethnic peoples (i.e., Circassians, Laz, Kurds, Arabs, and Turks) and led them to confront Armenian rebellions in Eastern Anatolia. While European nationalist sentiments spread to the Armenians in Eastern Anatolia, leading to their increased call for separation, the Ottoman Empire was able to maintain its legitimacy among its Muslim population, mainly that of its Kurds, Arabs, Circassians, Bosnians, and Macedonians. This may indicate that the Ottoman Empire's legitimacy among these communities was maintained under the notion that the lands were Islamic, the Sultan was the Caliph of all Muslims, and the Ottoman Empire was the *Dar'ul-Islam*.

Because Islam provided the social fabric, Turkish nationalism based on ethnic lines did not work in the Ottoman Muslim society. Defined within an ethno-Turkish national framework, the establishment of the Turkish nation state resulted in the exclusion of other ethnicities, leading to a widening of Kurdish dissent and further rebellions.⁹⁵ Because the common cultural heritage of Ottoman Muslim society was based on Islam, members of the Kurdish 'ulama such as Said Nursi (1878-1960), advocated the priority of religious identity and defined nationalism as a social illness.⁹⁶

Ottomanism and Islamism were the first attempts to define the essence of the Empire. While Ottomanism brought equality to the people with the promise of citizenship, it aimed to create an Ottoman society based on the cultural heritage of the Ottomans. As the administration made efforts to enrich this cultural heritage by modeling

⁹⁵The intensive Kurdish rebellions in the Republican Era such as *Şeyh Said* (1925), *Ağrı* (1930), and *Dersim* (1937-1938) rebellions can be examples for the demonstration that the official ethno-centric ideology caused.

⁹⁶Said Nursi, *Tarihçe-i Hayat: Bediüzzaman Said Nursi'nin Hayatı (The Life Story: the Life of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi)*, (Istanbul: Şahdamar Yayınları, 2008), 98.

social and governmental institutions along Western lines, the incompatibility between Western mentality and the Islamic essence of Ottoman society resulted in the failure of Ottomanism. This failure stands in contrast to the regime of Abdulhamid II, which enforced modernization in both the social and political levels by applying it with both Islamic meaning and spirit.⁹⁷ After coming to power, the Young Turk movement did not attempt to change existing Islamic social attachments and there were numerous reasons for keeping this continuity, such as the Balkan Wars, WWI, and the War of Independence, all of which required spiritual unity among ethnically different people. Thus, an ethnically defined nationalism could never gain acceptance and furthermore, it harmed religious unity. Instead of embracing ethnic nationalism, the Young Turks embraced a cultural nationalism based largely on Islamic heritage and elements of Turkishness. While Ottomanism, Islamism, and Turkish nationalism moved on an Islamic line, each came to incorporate a specific characteristic. In other words, Ottomanism was an ideology based on the Empire's Islamic heritage as well as privileges to non-Muslims. Islamism was the politicization of Islam in an effort to keep the integrity of the Empire and to unify all Muslims. By placing Islam at the forefront of society and including non-Turkish Muslims, Turkish nationalism became an all-encompassing ideology that allowed the Empire to maintain its remaining territorial integrity.

⁹⁷Karpat, *Politicization*, 223-224.

CHAPTER II

THE ROLE OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH IN THE FORMATION OF ARMENIAN NATIONALISM

Introduction: Characteristics of Armenian Nationalism

“Armenian patriotism and the Armenian
Church have always been identified.”⁹⁸

Armenian nationalism emerged in the early nineteenth century as a result of external rather than internal factors. In the construction of this particular nationalism, territorial affiliation, with its notions of a fixed homeland, played a central role for the Armenians. The loss of control over the Armenian territories in 1375 placed the Armenian community under the control of various later empires such as the Safavids, Persians, Ottomans, and Czarist Russia. The Armenian homeland, once united, was divided among different foreign powers. While Armenian territory was carved up by these imperial powers, the struggle between the powers opened up opportunity spaces for Armenians to contest imperial rule and articulate their own communal and, later, nationalist claims. On a more discursive level, Armenian notions of homeland, or lack thereof, i.e., Armenian dispersion, had found expressions in religious thought, which later buttressed the construction of a nationalist discourse that tied together diverse Armenian communities.

⁹⁸Sir Charles Eliot, *Turkey in Europe* (London: Edward Arnold, 1908), 388.

This study, which assesses the role of the Armenian Church and clergy in the construction of Armenian nationalism, borrows its theoretical framework from Anthony D. Smith, the revisionist scholar of nationalism. Smith highlighted the primacy of symbols, myths and narratives, as elements of a common culture that dominate the discourses of nationalisms. In Smith's own words, "what gives nationalism its power are the myths, memories, traditions, and symbols of ethnic heritages..."⁹⁹ and, through these ethnic symbols, "modern national identities are reconstituted in each generation, as the nation becomes more inclusive and as its members cope with new challenges."⁹⁹ In addition to the formative impact of cultural reservoirs, Smith also pays due attention to collective experiences of ethnicities and their contribution to the emergence of the nation.¹⁰⁰ This theoretical framework fits the Armenian case as the Armenian religious institution not only provided a network for the circulation of ideas across separate communities, but also emphasized a narrative of national origins that utilized the themes of dispersion and of victimization.

Historically speaking, the Armenian Church and its clergy strove to protect the Armenian community under reigns of foreign powers and, accordingly, they did not openly or strongly advocate pro-independence ideas.¹⁰¹ However, the attitude of the Church toward national freedom changed in the nineteenth century. For instance, Nalbandian argued that

[t]he political and diplomatic ferment was translated into patriotic feeling among the Armenians. A great nationalistic fervor was felt, especially among the youth who lived outside of the Turkish provinces. Patriarch Varzhabedian and Khrimian

⁹⁹Anthony D. Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 9.

¹⁰⁰Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Basic Blackwell, 1986), 39.

¹⁰¹Peter Rutland, "Democracy and Nationalism in Armenia," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol: 46. No: 5 (1994), 840.

Hairig spurred the younger generation to interest themselves in the homeland in Turkish Armenia.¹⁰²

Thus, the Armenian clergy in the second half of the nineteenth century started advocating the principle of nationalism and encouraged patriotism among the Armenian youth.

The clergy's embrace of nationalism coincided significantly with the *Tanzimat* era. In the face of the weakening of the Empire, Selim III launched a set of institutional reforms borrowed from the West. Murad II carried on the reforms called *Tanzimat Fermanı* (the Declaration of Regulations). In 1839, he extended their framework to encompass secular spheres, including the "economic, political, judicial, and educational institutions" with the declaration of *Gulhane Hatt-ı Humayun*.¹⁰³ A new set of reforms called *Islahat Fermanı* followed the *Tanzimat Fermanı* in 1856.¹⁰⁴ The *Islahat Fermanı* brought more secular innovations and warrants for the non-Muslim *millet*s in the name of Ottoman citizenship. This new identity of the Ottoman would mean that the superiority of the Muslims had come to an end.¹⁰⁵

Even when the clergy did not openly support the cause of Armenian nationalism, what mattered was the perception of the clerical institution in the eyes of the nationalists. Chakmakjian, for example, indicates that "[t]he Catholicos of the Armenians, the Patriarchs of Constantinople and Jerusalem, the Catholicos of Cilicia, and the Armenian Church, should have given wise guidance to the Armenians [in times of political crises],

¹⁰²Louise Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement: The Development of Armenian Parties through the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963), 136.

¹⁰³Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (Montreal: McGill Press, 1964), 137.

¹⁰⁴*Ibid.* 152.

¹⁰⁵Turgay Uzun, "Osmanlı Devleti'nde Toplumsal Yapı ve Ayrılıkçı Ermeni Hareketinin Doğuşu (Social Structure and the Emergence of Separatist Armenian Movement in the Ottoman State)" in *Dünden Bugüne Türk Ermeni İlişkileri (Turkish-Armenian Relations: From Past to Present)*, eds. İdris Bal and Mustafa Cufalı, (Ankara: Lalezar Kitabevi, 2006), 197.

but they, too, had been *identified* with the national aspirations.”¹⁰⁶ The Armenian Orthodox Church and Armenian identity were the bonds that held together the diverse Armenian communities.

Undoubtedly, the contribution of the *millet* system of the Ottoman Empire to the preservation of religious, and thus communal, identities could not be denied. The *millet* system of the Empire provided a framework of tolerance for the *millets* that were officially recognized as a legitimate part of Ottoman society. In a sense, this was an application of Sharia, under which the people of the book, i.e., the Jews and Christians, were to be protected. In this context of Ottoman social structures, the religious leaders, who exercised their authority upon their respective millets, were the official representatives of non-Muslim communities, as they negotiated, and at times clashed, with the Ottoman state for further rights or for the preservation of already-gained privileges. The Armenian case was not an exception, as the Patriarchate provided political and religious guidance to his people. What makes the Armenian case interesting, however, is that the notion of “one religion, one nation” combined the ethnic and religious markers of identity, and further strengthened the Armenian community.

In the examination of Armenian nationalism, it becomes clear that primordial attachments to identities such as language, culture, territory and a distinct form of Christianity, as embodied in the Apostolic Armenian Church (Gregorian Church), played an important role in emphasizing a mythological Armenian identity. Peter Rutland holds that Armenian nationalism has a sense of territory which has been designated historically by the Armenians as the homeland since the early ages of Armenian history, which is

¹⁰⁶Hagop A. Chakmakjian, *Armenian Christology and Evangelization of Islam* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965), 102.

characterized by oppression, tragic migrations and constant attempts at returning to the homeland.¹⁰⁷ This particular historical memory was kept alive by the dominance of a shared religion and language. Albert Hourani has argued that

territorial patriotism, a sense of community with all who shared the same defined piece of land, rooted in love for that land itself... where that region had relatively clear boundaries and an unbroken tradition of separate administrative or political existence.¹⁰⁸

In the case of Armenian nationalism, as Khachig Tololyan clearly shows, the ideas of dispersion, embellished in both religious and secular terms, consolidated the Armenians who lived in separate diaspora communities. While the Armenians who lived in their homeland under foreign power protested injustices and inequalities within the limits of a socio-political hierarchy, the diasporian discourse of dispersion sharply differed in that it “envisaged the Armenians not simply as a series of religious communities but as a collectivity that could become a nation.”¹⁰⁹ In the dissemination of similar discourses, vernacular literature played a significant role to the extent that Toloyan calls it the “textual nation.”¹¹⁰

One can claim that there are certain stages in the construction of Armenian nationalism. The first and basic demonstration of these national aspirations was Armenian patriotism as expressed by religious figures and secular intellectuals. In accordance with discursive networks of communal identity, Armenian patriotism associated the land with the people. On a second level, the occupation of Armenian

¹⁰⁷Peter Rutland, “Democracy and Nationalism in Armenia”, *Europe-Asia Studies*, (Vol. 46, No: 5, 1994), 840.

¹⁰⁸Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), 342.

¹⁰⁹Khachig Tololyan, “Textual Nation: Poetry and Nationalism in Armenian Political Culture,” in *Intellectuals and the Articulation of the Nation*, Ronald Grigor Suny and Michael D. Kennedy, eds. (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1999) 80.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*, 79.

territory by foreign rulers brought forward notions of a mythical national spirit, struggle and national independence. Aspects of religion, literature, art and politics played a part in the formation of this larger context of struggle in nationalistic and revolutionary discourses.

Historical Background

The Armenian Church and the Ottoman Armenians

In the traditional hierarchy of the Armenian Church, the symbolic leader of Armenians is called Catholicos. Historically speaking, the Catholicate of Echmiadzin has an important and symbolic position for Armenians and the institution is recognized as the highest authority in the Armenian Church. In its history, this Catholicate had to move from Echmiadzin to Sis (Cilicia) and then Akhtamar (Akdamar) because of political pressures. During the Ottoman Empire, the Armenian Church had two more patriarchates, that of Istanbul and of Jerusalem. The Armenian Patriarchate of Istanbul was the legal representative of the Armenian millet and the highest authority of the Armenian Church in the eyes of the Ottoman Sultan.

The Armenian Patriarchate of Istanbul, established by Mehmed II in 1461, was the head of the Ottoman Armenians and was responsible for their social, economic, religious and political affairs. Thus, within the millet system of the Empire, this socio-political framework helped the Armenian Church integrate its ecclesiastical duties with political ones. Unlike Catholic and Orthodox millets in the Ottoman lands, the Armenian *millet* referred to both a religious and an ethnic identity that remained limited the religious division of Ottoman Armenians into Gregorian, Protestant and Catholic sects, as a result of a growing missionary presence, which sought the conversion of the different

sects of Christianity in the East. Therefore, the activities of Catholic and Protestant missions from the early nineteenth century onwards created the first major religious separation among the Armenians under the Ottoman Empire. This struggle for faith can be traced back to an earlier point in the history of Christianity in the East. The Church gained its authority after the official acceptance of Christianity in the early fourth century.¹¹¹ By claiming itself as the first Christian community, the Armenian Church sought legitimacy among the other Christian communities. From this point onwards, we see a competition between the Roman Catholic Church and the Armenian Church, reflected by the missionary activities of the modern era. By the 1850s, the missionaries had achieved considerable successes, and, the Ottoman Empire also recognized a Protestant *millet* (which a number of Armenians adhered to). Catholic Armenians were represented by the Catholic Patriarchate.

The divisions within the Ottoman Armenians were not limited to religious affiliation. While smaller Armenian communities had been living in Western Anatolia, the rest of the Ottoman Armenian population was concentrated in the eastern provinces of Anatolia. This demographic make-up largely determined the socio-economic status of the Ottoman Armenians. The Armenians of the Western Anatolia, especially of Istanbul and Izmir, came to enjoy higher economic and social status in urban centers, while the Eastern Armenians, who lived predominantly in rural lands, depended on farming and small-scale trade for their livelihoods. In terms of pre-modern class formation, the Armenian population was divided into four classes: the clergy, the *Amira*, the *Esnaf*, and the peasant. While the *Amira* class consisted of tax collectors, moneylenders, bankers and

¹¹¹Nalbandian, *Armenian Revolutionary*, 30.

civil servants in the Empire, and enjoyed warm relations with the Sultanate, the *Esnaf* class mostly consisted of merchants, small-scale traders and some intellectuals.

The French Revolution contributed to the consolidation of nationalist aspirations across the world by setting a successful example of a bottom-up revolution, and the currents of change affected the Ottoman world as well. The Ottoman Armenians, as well as other ethnic groups regardless of their religious affiliations, started developing schemes to secede from the Ottoman state. The Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 came to a conclusion with the Treaty of San Stefano in 1878, which was replaced by the Treaty of Berlin later that year. These treaties strengthened Ottoman suspicions of the revolutionary activities of the non-Muslim millets, which were later coined in international diplomacy as Greek, Bulgarian, Armenian and Albanian Question(s).¹¹²

The economic, military and political weakening of the Ottoman Empire induced the empire to find solutions. The interventions of foreign powers in the internal affairs of the Empire, combined with the French Revolution, pushed the Empire to set up innovations and reforms in the political, social, educational and military fields in order to avoid collapse. These reforms brought privileges to both foreign powers and millets. Russia, England and France acquired the rights to intervene in the empire's internal affairs after the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca in 1774.

Missionary Activities

One of the significant reasons for the emergence of the Armenian conflict in the Ottoman Empire was missionary activity. The Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca allowed Russia

¹¹²See David Gillard, ed, *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers From the Foreign Office Confidential Print: The Near and Middle East 1856-1914*, Vol. 1-8, (N.A.: University Publications of America, 1984).

to become a protectorate over the Orthodox Christian Church.¹¹³ Following this, the Catholic Church came under the protection of the French ambassador in Istanbul.¹¹⁴ However, according to Artinian, the Catholic Church's missionary activities over the Armenian Patriarchate had begun in the first decades of the seventeenth century.¹¹⁵

In contrast, Protestant missionary activity was first seen in the 1830s, and rapidly spread among the Armenians.¹¹⁶ The first protestant missionaries to Anatolia were Americans. The active role of France and Russia in Eastern Turkey led England to participate in the politics in the region. With this aspiration, in order to intervene in the internal Ottoman politics, England sent missionaries into the region, established schools, and erected churches.¹¹⁷ The Armenians, with Greeks, were the prior target of Protestantization.¹¹⁸ The missionaries encouraged the Armenians first to become Protestant and secondly to establish an independent Armenian state.¹¹⁹

The common point of all missionary activities was to plant the idea of independence among the Armenians. The concentration of missionary activities in Eastern Turkey, where the Armenian population was relatively dense, could not be explained as a coincidence. The idea of independence would bring two possible outcomes: independence or revolt. In the case of the realization of the first, Russia, France and England would claim a protectorate over the religious communities of their respective agents. In the case of the second outcome, the powers would have the right of

¹¹³Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 2nd edn., (Oxford: Oxford Press, 1968), 37.

¹¹⁴Artinian, *Osmanlı Devleti*, 45.

¹¹⁵Ibid.

¹¹⁶Ibid., 54.

¹¹⁷Ibid., 55-57.

¹¹⁸H. Tahsin Fendoğlu, "Türk Osmanlı ABD İlişkileri Bağlamında Ermeni Sorunu (The Armenian Question in the Context of Turkish Ottoman and US Relations)" in *Dünden Bugüne*, 224.

¹¹⁹Cited in Fendoğlu, 225.

intervention in Ottoman internal affairs. Both outcomes would be in favor of the powers.

The missionary activities caused internal conflict within Ottoman society by raising awareness in young Armenians through European education in the missionary schools. This rise of nationalist ideas occurred next to decline of the patriarchate authority over the Armenians. These were the major reasons for the emergence of the Armenian nationalism; however, the missionary activities can be explained only by the regional politics and demands of Russia, France and England.

The Eastern Policies of Russia and England

Although the missionary activities were a tool for Russia, England and France to realize their demands over the Middle East, the activities became a turning point for the Armenians. The emergence of the Armenian issue in the Ottoman Empire was born as a result of Russian political encroachment on the region of Eastern Turkey.¹²⁰ The first Russian-Armenian relations can be traced to 1723-1724, when Russia captured Caucasia. The relations were based on commercial and educational treaties between the Russians and the small Armenian groups living in the region.¹²¹ Russia initially began to train young Armenians to serve as military officers. Later, Russia opened institutes and schools for the general education of Armenians in order to launch a political movement against the Ottoman Empire.¹²² Russia's efforts were largely successful among the Armenians living in Iran and the Ottoman Empire. In the Turkish-Russian War of 1828-

¹²⁰Muammer Demirel, "Rusya'nın Ermeni Meselesine Etkisi (The Impact of Russia to the Armenian Question)" in *Dünden Bugüne*, 205.

¹²¹*Ibid.*, 205.

¹²²*Ibid.*, 206.

1829, the Armenians provided voluntary assistance to the Russian troops in the region.¹²³ The same scenario was repeated in the War of Crimea in 1854-1855.¹²⁴ During this period, many Armenians migrated from Ottoman lands to Russia.¹²⁵

In the Turkish-Russian War of 1877-1878, the Armenian officers educated by Russia fought in the Russian lines against the Ottomans. However, the most significant impact of the Armenian officers' involvement in the Russian army was the participation in Russian military activities by the Armenians who lived in Ottoman territory.¹²⁶ The Treaty of San Stefano, which ended the war between the Ottoman Empire and Russia on the 3rd of March 1878, was a critical point in terms of the status of the Armenians of the Empire. Article 16 was added because of the demand made by the Armenian officials of the Ottoman government, Stefan Aslanyan Pasha and Ohannes Nuryan Efendi, who represented the Patriarchate.¹²⁷ The article stated that:

In Armenia (*Ermenistan*)..., the Ottoman government would guarantee to immediately enforce modernization and reforms in the provinces where Armenians live in, and to protect them from the attacks of Kurds and Circassian.¹²⁸

With the treaty, "Armenia" and "Armenians" entered the international sphere for the first time.¹²⁹ Russia, in compliance with the Treaty, would intervene in the Empire's internal affairs. Due to the objection of Austria and England, the Treaty never got off the ground, and a new multilateral treaty was signed in Berlin on the 13th of July, 1878.

¹²³Ibid., 206.

¹²⁴Ibid., p. 207.

¹²⁵Sadi Kocaş, *Tarih Boyunca Ermeniler ve Türk-Ermeni İlişkileri (Turkish-Armenian Relations through the History)*, (Ankara: Altınok Matbaası, 1967), 70.

¹²⁶Bilal N. Şimşir, "Osmanlı Ermenileri ve Büyük Devletler (Ottoman Armenians and Great Powers)" in *Türk Tarihinde Ermeniler (Armenians in Turkish History)*, (İzmir: Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi, 1983), 121; Demirel, "Rusya'nın Ermeni Meselesine Etkisi," 205.

¹²⁷Şimşir, "Osmanlı Ermenileri," 122.

¹²⁸Ibid.

¹²⁹Ibid.

These external contexts partially explain the emergence of the Armenian question, but the Ottoman Armenians were not simply the receptacles of imperial aspirations. Scholars who have focused on the tragic events and massacres within the context of the Great War continued to fail to provide a framework for the internal dynamics of the emergence of Armenian nationalism. It is to this subject that we now return.

The Role of Religion in the Construction of Armenian Nationalism

This study argues that the turning point of Armenian nationalism is found in the changing attitudes of the clergy towards Armenian independence during the nineteenth century. Accordingly, the clergy started promoting the principles of self-rule instead of an attitude of cooperation with a foreign power such as Russia. This intellectual and ecclesiastical shift has earlier roots. The Mekhitharist Congregation, founded by Mekhithar in Istanbul in 1701, moved to Morea in 1703 and then to Venice in 1715, was a group of Armenian Catholic monks who were focusing on the rationale of the European enlightenment.¹³⁰ Exemplifying the first signs of “a cultural and religious revival among Armenians,” Mekhitharists put an emphasis on Armenian history, language and literature through “periodicals, printing, translations, a network of schools, and painstaking; and also provided the Armenian people to engage with the Western ideas.”¹³¹ The most important contribution of the Mekhitharists was the vernacularization of Armenian literature, which would become important during the nineteenth century for the spread of nationalist ideas among other similarly-minded Armenian intellectuals, clergy and

¹³⁰Nalbandian, *Armenian Revolutionary*, 33.

¹³¹Kevork B. Bardakjian, *A Reference Guide to Modern Armenian Literature, 1500-1920* (Detroit: Wayne State University, 2000), 77.

educated upper classes.¹³²

Nationalism is inherently a contestation of power relations. In the Armenian case, as noted before, imperial powers played an important role by supporting the Armenian revolutionary activity in the Ottoman Empire, using them as leverage against Istanbul.

Throughout the conflicts over the so-called Eastern Question, religion was used as a cover for power politics. Russia, France, and Great Britain pursued their policies on the basis of claims to the right of protection over the Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant communities of the Ottoman Empire.¹³³

Berkes's statement is noteworthy in terms of showing the power of religion in politics as well as the importance of politics in religious interactions. The example of an Armenian cleric from the Diaspora, Jacques Chahan de Cirbied, is quite telling in terms of clerical involvement in international politics. In 1800, he wrote a letter to Catholicos Ghukas of Echmiadzin, suggesting that Armenians should make political contact with France regarding independence.¹³⁴ For Nalbandian, Cirbied's ideas, with notions of national self-rule, were an exemplifier of "the influence of European thoughts and history on the Armenians in the Diaspora" and of Diasporan Armenians's support for "the people in the ancestral home and their determination to continue the struggle for the liberation of Armenia."¹³⁵

Another religious figure of the early eighteenth century, Khatchatur Abovian, also contributed to the awakening of the Armenian nation. He completed his education at the Monastery of Echmiadzin and then at the Nersessian Seminary in Tiflis.¹³⁶ In 1830, he went to Europe and studied philosophy and history, and also familiarized himself with

¹³²Ibid., Nalbandian, *Armenian Revolutionary*, 33.

¹³³Berkes, *The Development of Secularism*, 143-144.

¹³⁴Nalbandian, *Armenian Revolutionary*, 37.

¹³⁵Ibid.

¹³⁶Ibid., 39.

European languages. After completing his studies, he returned to Echmiadzin with his European-influenced thoughts. His writings, which were written in the vernacular, reached large audiences, and have thus made him the father of modern Armenian literature.¹³⁷ His significant contributions to Armenian literature included his translations from Homer, Schiller, Rousseau, Goethe, Karamzin, Zhukovsky and Krylov;¹³⁸ these efforts should not be seen as mere translations but rather as channels of transmission of European socio-economic and political ideas into the Armenian community. Having been influenced by the European example, he called for a national awakening among the Armenians of Russia with particular emphasis on Armenian patriotism. These thoughts also found sympathetic audiences among the Armenians of the Ottoman Empire after the 1850s.

The entrance of such European notions coincided with the timeframe when the Armenians of the Ottoman Empire faced religious division among themselves as a result of missionary activities. In 1831 and 1850, first the Catholic and then the Protestant Armenian *millets* were recognized as separate communities. These official recognitions by the Ottoman state were historically significant in that it showed how Istanbul was quite comfortable in accommodating new communities with different representations, as well as the collapse of the religious and national Armenian unity. This collapse led to the emergence of internal conflicts between the Armenian Patriarchate and the converted Armenians.

On a more socio-economic level, another internal problem existed in the

¹³⁷Ibid., 40; Bardakjian, *A Reference*, 135.

¹³⁸Meriatta Shaginyan, "Khachatur Abovian," *Soviet Literature* (Moscow, 1956), No. 1, 140, quoted in Nalbandian, *Armenian Revolutionary*, 40.

Armenian millet itself, namely between the *Amira* and *Esnaf* classes. Before focusing on the tension between these two classes, I shall give the socio-economic situation of the Armenian *millet* within the Empire. The Armenian millet, as other non-Muslim *millets*, had to pay *harac* (land tax) and *cizye* (the head tax) for exemption from military service and to pay for the miscellaneous services rendered to them by the Ottoman government. The merchant class was also responsible for paying income tax.

The Armenians in the Ottoman Empire primarily engaged in trade. The *Amira* class, which had technical skills among the traders, played a significant role in finance and industry.¹³⁹ They were the majority of *Sarrafs*, “bankers or moneylenders,” who were controlling the finance and economic affairs of the Empire.¹⁴⁰ Another subclass of the *Amira* was the merchants, called *Bazirgan* in Ottoman, who provided munitions for the army, and held the trade routes or controlled a certain trade.¹⁴¹ According to Barsoumian, the economic power of the *Amira* class allowed them to have good relations with the governors.¹⁴² They also had important networks from the Mediterranean and Eastern trades.¹⁴³ Furthermore, they became the “middlemen” between Ottoman officials and Western traders.¹⁴⁴ Mantran stresses that their hegemony in trade continued until the nineteenth century.¹⁴⁵

¹³⁹Hagop Barsoumian, “The Dual Role of the Armenian Amira Class within the Ottoman Government and the Armenian Millet (1750-1850),” in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: the Functioning of a Plural Society* (vol. 1: the Central Lands), eds. Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis, (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1982), 172.

¹⁴⁰*Ibid.*

¹⁴¹*Ibid.*, 175.

¹⁴²*Ibid.*, 176.

¹⁴³Recep Karakaya, *Ermeni Meselesi: Kronoloji ve Kaynakça (The Armenian Question: Chronology and Bibliography)*, (Istanbul: Gokkubbe Yayınları, 2005), 14.

¹⁴⁴Robert Mantran, “Foreign Merchants and the Minorities in Istanbul During the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,” in *Christians and Jews*, 134.

¹⁴⁵*Ibid.*

Barsoumian attributes a more important role to the *Amira* class in the Armenian *millet* since they had the power to control the patriarchate. *Amiras* contributed to the educational and cultural spheres of the Armenian *millets* by establishing schools and churches, supporting religious institutions, creating hospitals and publishing magazines.¹⁴⁶ The *Amira* class also played a critical role in the state, mediating between the state and the Armenian millet by “controlling both its [Ottoman State’s] financial-economic system and the Armenian millet.”¹⁴⁷

Within the Armenian millet, another economic group was the *Esnaf* (artisans) class, which settled in metropolises of the Empire. Consisting of Muslims and non-Muslim millets, the Armenian *Esnaf* class was a collection of registered guilds depending on their occupation. The *Esnaf* class paid income tax to the state and donated to local churches and the patriarchate.¹⁴⁸ Their donations for the churches and the patriarchate allowed them to assert their authority over the Armenian millet after the *Amira* class lost its economic power.¹⁴⁹

The *Amira* and *Esnaf* classes fought for control over the Patriarchate of Constantinople. The *Amiras*, who had close relations with the Ottoman government, traditionally controlled the Patriarchate of Istanbul. The *Esnaf* class wanted a share in this power, and claimed that the Armenians were not represented properly. Finally, an assembly consisting of sixteen *Amira* and fourteen *Esnaf* members was established by Patriarch Tchukhadjian (1844-1848).¹⁵⁰ Ironically, the actions taken by the Patriarchate,

¹⁴⁶Barsoumian, “The Dual Role,” 177-178.

¹⁴⁷Ibid., 181.

¹⁴⁸Artinian, *Osmanlı Devleti*, 39.

¹⁴⁹Ibid., 67.

¹⁵⁰Ibid., 44.

independent of the assembly, brought the two classes together against the Patriarch.¹⁵¹ Thus, in an attempt to solve the problem, a secular structure, consisting of two elected assemblies, was established. According to the new order, the Spiritual Assembly would rule over religious affairs, and the Supreme Assembly became responsible for secular affairs.¹⁵² This secular structure, however, could not solve the problems. In 1848, Armenians of Istanbul rose against the *Amira*-controlled Patriarch. For Nalbandian, the demonstration of the masses was important in terms of showing their demands for “democracy” and “political freedom.”¹⁵³

Turning back to a socio-political level, the *Tanzimat* and *Islahat* reforms attempted to create a more comprehensive identity, *Osmanlı* (Ottoman citizenship), at least partly in order to prevent the break-up of the Empire into subnations. The citizenship brought equal rights for Muslims and non-Muslims in administrative, judicial, economic and educational spheres. Thus, as a result of the close ties with the Ottoman government, Armenians began to hold official positions within public services.¹⁵⁴ Their positions would facilitate the emergence of a national constitution. Following the return of Armenian students from Europe, where they had been exposed to the principles of the French Revolution, the notions of democracy and nationalism surfaced in the community and spread quickly among the Armenians. In turn, these ideas were translated into reality with the establishment of the Armenian National Constitution in 1863, which secured privileges for the Armenian millet.

As discussed earlier, the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 was a turning point in

¹⁵¹Ibid., 44.

¹⁵²Ibid., 45.

¹⁵³Ibid., 45.

¹⁵⁴Uzun, “Osmanlı Devleti,” 197.

the emergence of the Armenian question. In 1878, the Treaty of Berlin was signed and the Armenian question entered the international scene for the first time. Article 61 required the Ottoman Empire to initiate reforms in Eastern Anatolia, which had the highest concentration of Armenians. In order to represent the Armenians of the Ottoman Empire, an Armenian delegation attended the Conference of Berlin. Mkrdich Khrimian, a bishop and, later, the Patriarch and the Catholicos, led the Armenian delegation in advocating their rights. Khrimian was obviously not a random choice, and his life story represented a larger picture that was central to the construction of Armenian nationalism.

A Case Study: the Example of Mkrdich Khrimian

The formation of Armenian nationalism and the decline of the Ottoman Empire, arguably without any causality, overlapped in the Congress of Berlin. Khrimian, the head of the Armenian delegation at the Congress, saw the nationalist demands of the Balkan communities and told his people the necessity of carrying out a similar program of national independence.* He focused his efforts on the common people rather than the Armenian elite. Khrimian had previously sought to realize the project of vernacularization by publishing the first newspaper in Armenian, directed at the Turkish Armenian audience in Van. Similarly, his books, sermons and poems also helped forge Armenian nationalistic ideals. For Lynch, Khrimian was such an important nationalist figure that he declares that “with him religion and patriotism are [became] almost interchangeable terms.”¹⁵⁵ Khrimian’s life story is a history of formative experiences that shed further light on how this Armenian Patriarch came to lead a nationalist movement.

*For Khrimian’s speech see Appendix.

¹⁵⁵H. F. B. Lynch, *Armenia: Travels and Studies*, Vol. 1, (Beirut: Khayats, 2nd edn, 1967), 237.

Born in 1820 in Van, he lost his father when he was young, and later suffered the deaths of his wife and daughter; these tragic moments caused acute change in his life. He received his initial education from his uncle after his father had died. In 1841, he set out to the provinces of Ararat and Echmiadzin. His first book, *Hravirag Araratian (Invitation to Ararat)*, which was published in 1850 as a long poem, consisted of his observations from this journey.¹⁵⁶ Following his travels, he came to Istanbul and occupied himself by teaching in several schools. As a result, he built a reputation among Armenians as the “Vanetsi varzhapet” (the teacher from Van).¹⁵⁷ The journeys of Khrimian continued, with travels to Jerusalem and Cilicia until 1854. He published another book, titled *Hravirag Yergreen Avediatz (Invitation to the Holy City)*, in which he narrated his journey to Jerusalem in 1852.¹⁵⁸ When he returned to Van, he received holy orders and became a *vardapet* (archimandrite) in 1855.¹⁵⁹ Thus, he joined the Church and had more opportunities to serve his people, but now as a pontiff¹⁶⁰ using “his natural eloquence.”¹⁶¹

By aiming to reach the masses, Khrimian founded an Armenian journal, *Artsvi Vaspurakan (The Eagle of Van)*, in 1855 after his return to Istanbul.¹⁶² Then, he moved back to Van and reestablished the journal “as the first periodical printed” in Van from 1858 to 1863.¹⁶³ In 1862, when he was assigned to Mush as an abbot, he began publishing a new journal called *Artsvik Taron* (*Little Eagle of Taron*), which was

¹⁵⁶Rubina Perroomian, “The Heritage of Van Provincial Literature” in *Armenian Van/Vaspurakan*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian, (California: Mazda, 2000), 135.

¹⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 135.

¹⁵⁸Fikrettin Yavuz, “Ermeni Kimliği’nin İnşasında Bir Patrik Portresi: Mıgırdıç Kırımyan (A Patriarch Portrait in the Building of Armenian Identity: Mkrdich Khrimian),” *SBE Akademik İncelemeler Dergisi*, Vol. 2, No: 1, (2007), 257-289.

¹⁵⁹Lynch, *Armenia*, 240; Perroomian, “Heritage of Van,” 136.

¹⁶⁰Perroomian, “Heritage of Van,” 136.

¹⁶¹Lynch, *Armenia*, 240.

¹⁶²Perroomian, “Heritage of Van,” 136; Lynch, *Armenia*, 240.

¹⁶³Perroomian, “Heritage of Van,” 138

published from 1863 to 1865.¹⁶⁴ He also established a theology school, *Zharanavarots*, in the Monastery of Varag.¹⁶⁵ The focus of the school was to provide students with a modern education by emphasizing language, folklore and literature.¹⁶⁶ The school graduated many students who later led the Armenian revolutionary movements.¹⁶⁷ A similar school was also founded in Mush by Khrimian during his duty. Because of his services to the Armenians of Mush and the abolishment of taxes over the Armenians as a result of his endeavors, he was affectionately called *Hairig* (little father), and this nickname became well-known among Armenians.¹⁶⁸

In 1869, Khrimian became the Patriarch of Constantinople, the official representative of the Orthodox Ottoman Armenians in the eyes of the Porte.¹⁶⁹ Lynch states that since his popularity threatened the Ottoman government, his resignation was expected after his four-year term in 1873.¹⁷⁰ Following the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878, he was elected by Nerses, the new Patriarchate of Constantinople, as the spokesman for the delegation representing the Armenians at the Berlin Congress of 1878.¹⁷¹ After witnessing the independence struggles of the Balkan communities at the Congress, he called for the armament of the Ottoman Armenians in order to fight for an independent Armenia. His sermon, called the Paper Ladle, was a declaration of a national struggle with a final goal of establishing an Armenian state.

Returning from Berlin, Khrimian arrived at Van and served as bishop there

¹⁶⁴Ibid., 138-139

¹⁶⁵Nalbandian, *Armenian Revolutionary*, 53; Peroomian, "Heritage of Van," 139.

¹⁶⁶Ibid.

¹⁶⁷Ibid.

¹⁶⁸Lynch, *Armenia*, 241

¹⁶⁹Ibid.

¹⁷⁰Ibid., 241

¹⁷¹Ibid

between 1879 and 1885.¹⁷² In the following years, he preached in some districts of Istanbul¹⁷³ until he was elected the Catholicos, the religious leader of all Armenians at Echmiadzin, in 1893, where he remained until his death in 1907. During his Catholicate, he attempted to direct some political efforts in favor of Armenians within the Ottoman Empire and Czarist Russia.¹⁷⁴ After this brief encyclopedic summary of Khrimian's biography, I now return to a more analytic and thematic examination of Khrimian.

Khrimian was not only a religious man but also a traveler, thinker, journalist, teacher and activist. Since "Armenian patriotism and the Armenian Church have always been identified,"¹⁷⁵ his religious personality allowed his popularity to spread among Armenians. However, his writings, travels, ideas and activities helped him gain the love of the Armenian people, especially the laity. The strong ties between the *Hairig* and the Armenians were forged as a result of his particular emphasis on using the vernacular language in his writings and his pro-Armenian political activities. Khrimian's journeys to Echmiadzin, Ararat, and, later, Jerusalem and Cilicia strengthened his patriotic and religious feelings due to the religious significance of these places within Armenian Gregorian Orthodoxy. During his travels, Khrimian closely observed the state of the Armenians who inhabited these regions. Their pains inspired his patriotic feelings, and even though Khrimian's own native land was Van, he spent most of his life elsewhere, including Mush, Jerusalem, Cilicia and Istanbul for the purpose of serving his people.

On first coming to Istanbul, he began to teach in a girls' school, and later in other schools of the various districts of Istanbul. For Khrimian at that time, the education of

¹⁷²See Fikrettin Yavuz, "Ermeni Kimliği..."

¹⁷³Ibid.

¹⁷⁴Ibid.

¹⁷⁵Eliot, *Turkey*, 388.

girls was as important as the education of boys. He established two schools, first in Van and, later, in Mush. The curriculum was based on Europe's modern education system; however, the content of teaching focused on nationalistic and patriotic figures. For instance, Khrimian had his cousin, Khoren Khrimian, prepare three volumes of *Armenology*.¹⁷⁶ Another important function of these schools was to graduate students who would later be the prominent members of the Armenian revolutionary movements.¹⁷⁷

In addition to his educational activities, Khrimian always advocated the awareness of laymen with nationalistic and patriotic ideas, which was possible only through the medium of journals and literature. Defending the importance of the use of vernacular language, Khrimian established journals in the vernacular such as *Artsvi Vaspurakan*, The Eagle of Van, (1855-1863) and *Artsvik Taron*, The Little Eagle of Taron, (1863-1868). The primary goal of both of these journals was to utilize the vernacular language in order to awaken the national and patriotic consciousness of the peasantry. In addition to this ambitious objective, the journals carried out a mission to acquaint the Patriarchate of Constantinople with the conditions of the Armenians of Eastern Anatolia.¹⁷⁸ Minassian states that the activities of Khrimian during his religious service made Varag, a district of Van, "the cradle of the national movement and one of the symbols of the Armenian cultural rebirth."¹⁷⁹

In Khrimian's literary works, it is possible to see the similar nationalistic and patriotic themes and notions that were embellished by religious narratives. Khrimian's first two books, *Hravirag Araratian* (*Invitation to Ararat*) and *Hravirag Yergreen*

¹⁷⁶Perroomian, "Heritage of Van," 139.

¹⁷⁷Ibid.

¹⁷⁸See Fikrettin Yavuz, "Ermeni Kimliği..."

¹⁷⁹Anahide Ter Minaassian, "Van 1915" in *Armenian Van*, 223.

Avediatz (Invitation to the Holy City), consisted of long poems, and were based on his journeys to Ararat and Jerusalem. In these books, Khrimian depicts the beauty of the lands and places that serve as the backdrop for the painful lives of the Armenians, within the framework of creating a free Armenia. One significant feature of these books was that it asked all Armenians living in diaspora to return to the Armenian “homeland.” Another book of Khrimian was *Papik ev Tornik (Grandpa and Grandson)*, written in 1894.¹⁸⁰ Peroomian calls the book a “romanticized portrayal of the Armenian village and peasant.”¹⁸¹ Again, similar themes of Armenian dispersion and suffering are placed within the larger notions of patriotism. Khrimian’s poems were significant instruments for the dissemination of patriotic ideals in that they were easily memorized and circulated. In this sense, the combination of religious and nationalistic themes was poetized by Khrimian. At times, these poems advocated the means of violence in order to reach the larger goal of creating an independent Armenia. As Atamian holds, Khrimian believed that “there could be no hope for his people except by force.”¹⁸² An example from his poems, the verses from *The Memorial of the Lamenting Soldier*, provides an idea of his desire for freedom:

Ye living soldiers, fare ye well!
 I leave this world. I bore
 The sword, and perished by the sword,
 As Christ foretold of yore.
 Angel of love incarnated!
 You said all men that live
 Are brethren; give us your peace,

¹⁸⁰Peroomina, *Heritage of Van*,” 150

¹⁸¹*Ibid.*

¹⁸²Sarkis Atamian, *The Armenian Community: The Historical Development of a Social and Ideological Conflict* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1955), 85.

Which this world cannot give!¹⁸³

Clearly, this poem combines the recurring themes of religious salvation, suffering, other-worldliness and bravery.

His poetic skills and his natural eloquence were also reflected in his sermons. One important aspect of his sermons was his association of nationalistic figures with religious ones. His most famous sermon was “The Paper Ladle,” which was given after his return from the Congress of Berlin in 1878. In this sermon, he used an analogy of a ladle and dish with the sword and freedom in explaining the Balkan countries’ struggle for freedom during the Congress. For him, the freedom of Armenia was only possible through the use of armed force. In short, Khrimian’s popularity among the Armenians, combined with his rhetorical skills in sermons and the strength of his literary works like poems, helped him disseminate his nationalist and religious ideas among his compatriots. Now, let me turn to the next section where I discuss a more theoretical perspective, i.e., the issue of whether or not these nationalist and religious notions put forward by Khrimian form an ethnic or religious nationalism.

Armenian Nationalism: Religious Nationalism or Ethnic Nationalism?

There are three major factors that lead the Church to participate actively in the emergence of Armenian nationalism: religion, the dual structure of the Church, and subnational identity that was perpetuated for hundreds of years. To clarify, I shall further explore these factors. Armenians consider themselves as the first Christian community and base their understanding of Christianity on the practices of the apostles. By emphasizing such ancestral origins, they strengthened their understanding of their own

¹⁸³Ibid.

identity as religiously superior to other Christian communities and nations. The second factor is the dual structure of the Church. Similar to that of Jewish history, the perpetuation of the Armenian Apostolic Church in the Armenian history created a tradition of coexistence between both religious and political affairs. At the same time, the *millet* system of the Ottoman Empire, which divided the subjects along the lines of religious affiliation, allowed the Church to keep its ecclesiastical and political authority over the Armenian people. The third element is the fact that as a community the Armenians had lived under the yoke of foreign powers since the early fourteenth century. As subjugated communities under foreign rule for such a long time, the Church naturally became the center for a nationalist movement unified under a religious discourse.

In considering these factors, I argue that Armenian nationalism derived from ethnicity, religion and territory. In other words, Armenian nationalism is an ideology that sits on the discursive markers of Armenian ethno-religious identity. Central to these discourses was the specific notion of a historic homeland, which was processed with ideas of freedom and independence, and decorated with historical tragedies such as massacres, forced displacements and a corresponding emergence of Diaspora communities. In the emergence of this secular ideology, the Church used these characteristics of Armenian nationalism to address the sentiments that appealed to the masses and highlight certain political goals deemed to be appropriate for a given historical context. Thus, claims of secular, ethnic or religious bases of Armenian nationalism depend on who is making the claim. What is clear, however, is that all of these elements were central to the construction of Armenian nationalism.

Conclusion

In Armenian history, “Armenian awakening,” the leading concept of Armenian nationalism, dominated the historical accounts after the loss of independent Armenian rule in the fourteenth century. The emphases on Christianity, territory and history were the key elements of the process of the national awakening. The inspirational ideals of the French Revolution of 1789 formed the backbone of the discourses of Armenian nationalism, as was commonly the case elsewhere. This study has argued that the role of the Church in the emergence of Armenian nationalism in the nineteenth century cannot be ignored. The corresponding success of Armenian nationalism is thus inherently related to the populist approach of the Church.

Khrimian was a prominent figure in the formation of the Armenian nationalism. He was a pontiff, an intellectual, a leader, but also a peasant. All these features together made him *Hairig* of the Armenians. Atamian, for instance, claims that “[n]o man, perhaps, in Armenian history, has come to symbolize the kind, wise, paternalistic leader of his flock as did Khrimian who was given the title *Hairig* (little father) in affection by his people.”¹⁸⁴ Historically, his most important role was his position as the Catholicos of all Armenians, since the Armenian Catholicate took its power from the people and God. Thus, the Armenian patriarchate always ran a dual duty in terms of religious and national administration. This duality is the key element in understanding the role of the Church in the construction of Armenian nationalism. According to Chakmakjian,

[t]he Christological isolation of the Armenian Church contributed greatly to its distinctly national character. Inevitably, the national spirit developed into nationalistic and political aspirations. These came into fierce conflict with the

¹⁸⁴Atamian, *Armenian Community*, 84.

ruling Muslim state, namely, the Ottoman Empire, and the outcome was tragedy.¹⁸⁵

At the heart of the conflict between the Empire and the Armenian nationalists was territory. For the former, Eastern Anatolia was not to be lost in accordance with imperial ambitions. For the Armenian nationalists, however, the land was their traditional home usurped by foreigners for centuries. The conflict that ensued was a violent struggle between imperial and nationalist aspirations, and ultimately produced no victors, only losers.

¹⁸⁵Chakmakjian, *Armenian Revolutionary*, 95.

CHAPTER III

POLITICIZATION OF RELIGION

The previous two chapters have examined the formation of nationalism and how it relates to religion with case-study foci on Turkish and Armenian nationalisms. Here, I will examine the politicization of religion by nationalistic discourses and its possible results of the way people constructed their identities. Scholars working on the Armenian question have typically overlooked or ignored the religious dimension of the conflict. This research, instead of developing a new theory or approach to the interaction of religion and nationalism, aims at filling this scholastic gap. So, I will examine the research outcomes of the examination of Turkish and Armenian nationalisms from the perspective of religions and then will place the role of religions in the development of nationalism by demonstrating specific examples that explain the link. I believe that this analysis will open a gate to an understanding of the core reasons of the conflict.

Thus, this research primarily argues that the politicization of religion through nationalistic arguments creates a strong motivation among the common people, which can result in violence. In other words, the inquiry that seeks an answer to in what conditions and how nationalism makes sense for common people, especially for the peasants in the case of the Armenian question, can be explained by putting stress on the role of religion as a motivating factor. In order to answer this question, I have examined the role of religion in the formation process of Turkish and Armenian nationalisms. By

doing so, my goal is to establish a framework for the place of religion in these two societies.

Chapter I argues that Islam in the Ottoman case was a dominant identity-marker rather than ethnicity that informs the nation. Turkish nationalism remained an elite movement until the Republican era, and the common people continued to identify themselves first and foremost as Muslim. In this environment, Islam kept its dominance and its power of motivating people in rural areas regardless of ethnicity. The language derived from Islamic literature such as *vatan*, *cihad*, *şehit*, and *gazi*, and the discourses inherited from Turkish culture, such as *ocak* and *devlet baba* played a significant role in the defense of the lands of both individual and *vatan*. These two aspects are concluded with two Islamic explanations: “*Ulu’l emre itaat*” (Obedience to the authority)¹⁸⁶ and “*Vatan sevgisi imandandır*” (Love of homeland is a part of faith).

Chapter II deals with the relation between the Armenian Church and nationalism. It is necessary here to underline once again that the examination of Armenian nationalism is limited to the Ottoman Armenians in general and the Armenians living in the Eastern Ottoman provinces in particular. The separation of the Armenian and Greek churches in the fourth century as well as the territorial map compressed by Byzantium, Persian, and later Turkish states created an image of “self-isolation” among the Armenians. This image was transformed into a kind of unique identity for Armenians since the Armenian Church administered only to the Armenian people or, in contrast, only to the Armenian people affiliated with the Church. Thus, many scholars of Armenian history call “national Church” one of the Armenian Church’s defining characteristic. This religio-nationalist

¹⁸⁶Qur’an, 4/59. For translation, see Asad, *Message*.

movement was delivered mostly by the religious figures that put emphasis on the revolutionary activities including but not limited to violence. The analysis of the formation of the two nationalisms will be discussed in the framework of the leading factors of their emergence, characteristics, and conclusion.

The Causes of the Emergence of Turkish

and Armenian Nationalisms

The timeline of Turkish nationalism, as discussed earlier, goes back to notions of Ottomanism. Ottomanism emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century in order to absorb the influence of nationalism over the non-Muslim communities by promising equal rights regardless of religion and race. The loss of regions mostly populated by Christians (Rumelia, i.e., today's Balkans) caused Abdulhamid II to change the policy to Islamism in order to avoid the dissolution of Muslim people composed of diverse ethnicities. In spite of the fact that Islamism was a true policy since the reign of Abdulhamid II, Arabs, Kurds, Circassians, and other Muslim elements consisted of Muslim *millet* as the majority and settled within all parts of the Empire; its discriminatory feature and absolutism caused the non-Muslim elements, who already gained national consciousness, to revolt against the administration. In 1908, the CUP captured the administration by objecting to Abdulhamid's absolutism and constructed the Second *Meşrutiyet* (Constitutionalism). However, the CUP government did not perform nationalistic policy; in fact, they could not venture to lose non-Turkish Muslim elements by emphasizing national discourses. Thus, the emergence of actual Turkish nationalism was to be in the early republican era.

In the case of Armenian nationalism, it is difficult to draw a clear-cut timeline for

the emergence of Armenian nationalism. This difficulty is rooted in the literature of Armenian historiography. While nationalism is a modern concept in a specific socio-political context, there is a very strong emphasis in Armenian historiography on national awakening as embodied within the Armenian Church since its separation from the Greek Church. However, an actual national awakening is first traced in the beginning of the eighteenth century with the establishment of the Mekhitharist Congregation in 1701. The focus on Armenian history and literature, and the translation of Western classical works into the Armenian vernacular, can be counted as the first flare of the Armenian national awakening process. The tolerant atmosphere created by the *Tanzimat* and *Islahat* reforms established grounds for the emergence of more liberal demands from non-Muslim communities, including the Armenians. Thus, the forerunners of Armenian nationalism in the Ottoman Empire were to be the Western educated students who returned to Istanbul in the second half of the nineteenth century in which the Armenian National Constitution was accepted (1860) and the revolts were seen in Anatolia (Zeitun 1862, Van, 1862, Erzurum, 1863; and Mush, 1864). With the provocation of the students, the *Amira* class lost its power over the Church, and the Church came to be involved in matters of nationalism. The message of involvement was delivered to the common people by religious figures. Here, too, is seen the politicization of religion with nationalistic discourses as Abdulhamid's Islamism later would do. The politicization of the Armenian Church would encourage revolutionary activities for its people.

As I will mention later, the process of the politicization of the Armenian Church was a result of its power struggle with the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF), known well as Dashnaks, over the common people. While the ARF organized uprisings

in the Ottoman provinces starting in the 1860s, the Church saw the ARF as a threat to its population. ARF, established in Tiflis and influenced by socialism, saw socialist ideology as a solution for not only Armenians but also the peasantry of the Ottoman Empire in the eastern region.

The Armenian Church's role in the distribution of nationalism, the influence and contribution of the Diaspora to Armenian literature, history, and thus to national awakening, the implications of the *Hamidian Cavalry* in the Eastern region, the manipulative activities of competing powers, namely Britain, France, and Russia, in the eastern region of the Empire, and the Armenian revolutionary movements and its political parties led Armenian nationalism to complete its formation in the late nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century.

The Characteristics of Turkish and Armenian Nationalisms

It would not be wrong to say that the Turkish nationalism was shaped as an immediate reaction to new events. As a result of the multiethnic structure of the Empire, Ottomanism and Islamism grew to be more inclusive. However, Armenian nationalism appeared with the promise of freedom, thus it was aggressive. Being a subnation under the rule of a Muslim state facilitated the motivation of people toward an independent Armenia. For centuries, Armenians experienced the phenomena of being “self-isolated,” starting with their separation from the Greek Church and continuing to be under the sovereignty of different reigns. As a unique church that corresponds to a specific territory and people, bound by ethnicity, culture, blood, race, and/or history, the Armenian Church and Armenian nationalism have always been identified together.

Since the delivery of nationalism was conducted by the Armenian Church and its

local religious leaders, nationalism gained acceptance among the common people. By wielding economic reasons and using religious language, the religious leaders aggressively provoked the peasants to act against the Ottoman central and local authorities. Because of a lack of state, the success of Armenian nationalism required that the common people engage in a mass movement.

Contrary to Armenian self-isolation, the Ottoman Empire enjoyed being a super power for centuries. Having the ease of being a super power allowed the Empire to conduct tolerant policies for its millets. By the nineteenth century, due to the irresistible influence of nationalism, the Empire attempted to protect its social and territorial integrity. Thus, Ottomanism was for all millets, Islamism for Muslims, and Turkish nationalism for Turks, and, potentially, Turkifiable subjects such as Circassians, Albanians, Bosnians, and so on. So, the coverage of Turkish nationalism must have been more comprehensive and been based not on ethnicity but on a social common ground—religion, namely Islam.

In the face of the growing influence of the West and the dissolution of nations, Turkish nationalism was formed in a nostalgic way aiming to reach the height of its former power, success, and glorious history. Thus, attempts to reinterpret Islam according to the needs of the modern age are the indicators of the importance of Islam in both social and political spheres. In order to demonstrate the compatibility of Islam and nationalism, Gökalp's use of the Qur'an to justify his nationalism and his references to modernist-Islamists such as Afghani are clear examples of these attempts.

In my opinion, there are two reasons why Turkish nationalism remained an elite movement: the multiethnic formation of the Empire, and the limited access to and of the

public. The first reason was already discussed in previous chapters. Regarding the second reason, access has two dimensions: from public to elite and from elite to public. Since intellectual circles were located mainly in Istanbul, the students who went to Europe for education came back to Istanbul, not to their native towns, in order to assume a place in this circle. Thus, some educated, common people were becoming members of the elite. This was the first dimension. The second dimension was the locality. The ‘ulama and sheikhs in rural regions were members in their local circle. The strong influence of Islam on these local elites obstructed nationalism to find acceptance among commoners. So, nationalism, as an ideology that threatened status and authority, the local elite never welcomed such an ideology.

From all these analyses and outcomes, it is possible to draw a general definition for both nationalisms. Armenian nationalism was an ethno-religious nationalism since the Armenian Church and its people were identified by an ethnicity. It is ironically, the Church had always been the official representative of the Armenians in the eyes of the Ottoman sultans. Armenian nationalism succeeded in being a mass movement through the delivery of religious channels. It was aggressive for two reasons. First, the Church and its local representatives fed nationalism with religious discourses, figures, and ideals. Second, the contemporary super powers used the Armenians as a tool for the sake of their demands on the eastern region by putting emphasis on the rights of the Christian minority and playing the role of their protector. The final characteristic of Armenian nationalism was to be romantic, which was, again, narrated and idealized by the Church in the framework of having a free Armenia.

On the other side, Turkish nationalism completed its formation relatively late,

after the Republic as a top-down ideology. However, it was Islam that dominated the social ties and political developments in the multiethnic environment of the Empire. Thus, Turkish nationalism was based on cultural-religious identities rather than ethnicity; and thus it was inclusive, not aggressive, like Armenian nationalism. It circulated among the elite, especially in Istanbul, but never turned to a mass movement. Until the republican era, the local elite, consisting of ‘ulama and sheikhs, held an authority over the common people. Thus, Islam kept its dominance among the people. On one hand, while the politicization of Islam by Abdulhamid II held the Muslims together, on the other hand it caused the non-Muslim elements to revolt due to its exclusionary policies.

In the example of the Armenian question, in addition to social, political, and economic dimensions, the religious characteristic should be taken into account in order to understand how people are mobilized and for what reason. Nationalism, of course, in the socio-political context, created incredible influence over the people by touching and scratching their ancestral attachments and praising their own “self” superiority against the “others.” However, religions have been in peoples’ lives before nationalism, and people have killed and died for their beliefs. So, nationalisms ignited the desire to kill by using religions to motivate people. The reactions of the Ottoman people, which consisted of Turks, Kurds, or Circassians, were not based on their ethnicity or nation; it was Islam that motivated these diverse ethnic people against Armenians as well as “others”. It was the Armenian Church that stimulated the masses for a free Armenia, which had been promised and thus perceived as an independent Armenia.

In order to clarify, the Ottoman people and Armenians within the Empire had long lived in the same territory, shared the same neighborhood, and enjoyed their own

religions as their own ethnic or national identities for centuries until the emergence of nationalism. Nationalism not only created new identities but also transformed spiritual/divine aspects into secular characteristics. As it transformed religious communities into national communities, it converted religions to nationalized versions of religions. However, this transformation was not a one-way direction. As much as nationalism changed the religious perception of society into nationalistic discourse, religion also shaped the characteristics of nationalism.

My argument at this point is that Turkish and Armenian nationalisms mainly differ in their conclusions. While both cases experienced the politicization of religion during almost the same periods, exactly after the second half of the nineteenth century, there is an important distinction to be made. As discussed above, the formation of Turkish nationalism was late in regards to Armenian nationalism. The reason for these different formation processes was the social structure of the Ottoman Empire and Armenians. By completing its formation, Armenian nationalism declared its ethnic-based identity that was combined with religion for centuries. On the other hand, Turkish nationalism was experiencing an Islamic phase, which was based on religious identity and particularly abstained from emphasizing ethnic identities.

Once analyzing the formation process of Turkish and Armenian nationalisms, what do the outcomes of the process indicate? First, the examination of these two nationalisms demonstrates that both nationalisms are constructed on and with a religious basis. By taking this argument to the center, this main argument, I will discuss that “religiously constituted nationalism increases the propensity for violence in a given

polity.”¹⁸⁷ I borrow this argument from a paper which deals with “the late nineteenth century Kulturkampf between Protestant and Catholic Germans,” and “the Yugoslav wars” in terms of religious conflict. In his paper, Acuff examines “the role of religion in nationalist violence” by first admitting “national collective identity is constructed through a complex mixture of ideas, many of which arise from the prior religious identities of a people.”¹⁸⁸

As Durkheim notes, religion is the essential institution that spiritually and socially connects individuals to society and creates a conscious of collectivity.¹⁸⁹ As the examination of Turkish nationalism has showed, the ethnically diverse Muslim people of the Ottoman Empire in eastern Anatolia identified themselves with their religious identity rather than their ethnicity. Similarly, for the Armenian peasants who lived in the same territory, there was no discrepancy between their ethnic and religious identity, which means that Armenian national identity aligned with the religious identity. The role of the Armenian Church in the distribution of nationalism facilitated Armenian peasants in engaging with nationalism. So, what we have here is that, while the Ottoman people still did not give priority to national identity and continued to identify themselves as Muslim, the Armenians had already embraced nationalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Similar to social identification, while Abdulhamid II pioneered Islamism by politicizing the religion, the Armenian Church incorporated nationalism as

¹⁸⁷M. Jonathan Acuff, "One Nation Under God: Nationalism, Religion, and Collective Violence." *The paper presented at the annual meeting of the ISA's 49th Annual Convention, Bridging Multiple Divides, Hilton San Francisco, San Francisco, CA, USA, Mar 26, 2008.* Access date: 2010-10-20 http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p253667_index.html. A somewhat different version of this essay will appear in Jeffrey Ross ed., *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Violence*, (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, December, 2010).

¹⁸⁸Ibid.

¹⁸⁹Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, Joseph Ward Stein, trans. (New York: Free Press, 1915), 292-293.

its political discourse in administration level. In both cases, it is obvious that religion was politicized by authorities. However, this politicization differed in the articulation of Armenian nationalistic discourses. The explanation of this differentiation can be found in the natures of Islam and Christianity.¹⁹⁰ According to Adrian Hastings, the nature of Christianity is able to shape nations and nationalisms:

Because of the lack of evident political concern in the New Testament as also within the early Christian community, Christianity does not start – as Islam did – with any clear political model of its own. As a consequence when Christians came to power they were able to go in two very different directions. The one, the nation-state; the other, the world empire.... The first state to become Christian was Armenia in the late third century and the survival of the Armenian national identity from then until now is surely one of the remarkable things in human history. The kingship did not survive, what did do so was the Armenian Bible, liturgy and related literature.¹⁹¹

So, the espousing of a secular concept, nationalism, by a divine institution, i.e., the Armenian Church, becomes meaningful in Hastings' words. Furthermore, Hastings claims that, unlike Benedict Anderson, the appearance of nationalism in Christianity did not depend on diminishing the influence of religion since it “never had a sacred language.”¹⁹² As he correctly puts, the language of Christianity lost its sacredness after leaving Palestine by translating the Bible into the vernaculars, such as “Syriac, Armenian, Coptic, Ethiopian and Latin in the early centuries.”¹⁹³ Contrast to Christianity, the language of Islam has always been sacred. Attempts at the vernacularization of prayers in the Republican era did not find acceptance from the public.

Another noteworthy point made by Hastings is the role the clergy played in the

¹⁹⁰ Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 187.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 198.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 194.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 194.

nationalization process, a point that matches exactly the case of Khrimian. “It was the lower clergy who, living in their parishes throughout Europe, relatively poor, literate, educated in cathedral schools..., in regular touch with both the landed and the peasantry, fostered a sense of shared local, provincial or national identity.”¹⁹⁴ Khrimian, as an example of the Armenian case—lived mostly in and around Van, his hometown, received education from local churches, came from a poor peasant family—encouraged his people to adopt a nationalist ideology.

Even though the Muslim ‘ulama of the Ottoman Empire lived in a similar environment, they were distinguished from Christian clergy in terms of religious approaches to nationalism. The more significant difference was the religions’ perception of politics, in general, and nationalism, in particular. The Kurdish ‘ulama’s attitude that gave priority to religious identity was one the reasons for the late the emergence of ethnic nationalist ideas among the Kurdish people.

Having clarified the relationships of Turkish nationalism with Islam and Armenian nationalism with the Gregorian Armenian Church, I shall now turn to how they were affiliated with religion and came to encounter one another.

Identification of Ethnicity with Religion

Armenian identity is based on its “uniqueness” of national representation by a national church through its own liturgical language.¹⁹⁵ Under the umbrella of Christianity, the Armenian Gregorian Church gained a national affiliation with the Armenians. Thus,

¹⁹⁴Ibid., 192.

¹⁹⁵Anthony D. Smith, *Theories of Nationalism*, (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 2nd edn. 1983), 221.

many scholars of nationalism associate this affiliation with Jewish identity.¹⁹⁶ The ethno-religious Armenian identity in its historical formation does not allow one to make a clear analysis in order to separate ethnic and religious attachments of the integrated identity. As Claire Mitchell discusses, one needs to take Armenian identity as the result of “a dynamic two-way relationship between religious and ethnic identity.” In Armenian identity, religion is meant not only as an ethnic marker, but also as a support for ethnicity via “its symbols, rituals and organizations,” and fabric of ethnicity by providing sacredness, ideological concepts, and institutions for social and political mobilizations.¹⁹⁷

There were two significant reasons for the preservation of Armenian identity. The first reason was the millet system of the Empire that categorized its people in terms of their religious identity instead of their ethnic identity. Due to the millet system, the religious institution (Orthodox Christian, Catholic Christian, Gregorian, Jewish, and later Protestant Christian churches) was the legal representative of its members. This religion-based identification allowed the Gregorian Church, to have authority over its Armenian people.

Secondly, by being a subnation under an imperial power, this position led to the creation of an instinct for preservation of the Armenian identity in order to avoid assimilation. Again, it was the Church protecting the Armenian identity by “autonomisation of the political category with respect to the religious domain.”¹⁹⁸ The power struggle between the ARF, known as the Dashnak Organization founded in Tiflis

¹⁹⁶See as examples, Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood*; Smith, *Theories of Nationalism*; Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1983).

¹⁹⁷For two-way relationship between religion and ethnicity, see Claire Mitchell, “The Religious Content of Ethnic Identities,” in *Sociology*, (Vol. 40: 6, 2006), 1135-1152.

¹⁹⁸Paul Zawadski, “Nationalism, Democracy and Religion,” in *Revisiting Nationalism: Theories and Processes*, eds. Dieckhoff, Alain and Christophe Jaffrelot, (New York: Palgrave MacMillian, 2005), 165.

in 1890, and the Armenian Church over the mass population consisting of workers, peasants, and local traders was another indication of the identification process of the Eastern Armenians of the Ottoman Empire. While the Dashnak revolutionists attempted to use the religious areas for their meetings in order to preach their socialist messages, the Church severely objected to the use of churches and monasteries for the Dashnaks' purposes.¹⁹⁹

The identification of Armenians via religious sentiments was not a modern process, but gained considerable acceleration after the emergence of nationalism. The clergy saw the potential to lose its authority over its people, since nationalism not only triggered rationality but also threatened the divine attachments of people by politicizing them. In other words, nationalism as a secular concept may aim to displace, adapt, and/or politicize the function of divine religions.²⁰⁰ In three cases, religion remains a major element for the domain of nationalism. Thus, the approach of the clergy to nationalism would be on the basis of rejection, cooperation/adaption, or contribution. The Armenian clergy did not reject nationalism, moreover it cooperated with and contributed to nationalism. I will turn later to the issue of the contribution to and cooperation with nationalism.

In the Ottoman case, it was obvious that Islam was an identity-marker for both the state and its people. With the exception of the position of the sultanate, all Muslim people enjoyed the same rights regardless of their ethnicity in administration, military, and

¹⁹⁹For a detailed study on the conflict between ARF and the Church for the power struggle in the Eastern Ottoman, see Kapriel Serope Papazian, *Patriotism Perverted: a Discussion of the Deeds and the Misdeeds of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, the so-called Dashnagtzoutune*, (Boston: Baikar Press, 1934).

²⁰⁰Elie Kedouire discusses the possible relationship of nationalism and religion. He offers three models: a. Secular replacement, neo-traditionalist, and political religion models. Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism in Asia and Africa*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971).

bureaucracy. Due to Islamic law, Sharia, although the Muslim population was “millet-i hakime,” i.e., the dominant or superior people who enjoyed socio-political privileges and benefits, other non-Muslim religious groups had the opportunity and space to perform their religious requirements. Since this religion-based system allowed non-Muslim elements to keep their ethnic identities alive, it prevented the emergence of ethnic ideas among Muslim populations. Although the Ottoman Empire, as an Islamic state in terms of its law, gave priority religious to identity over ethnic or national identity, there was always Turkishness in the representation of Islamic religious identity in the eyes of non-Muslims. So, the Ottoman Empire was called a Turkish state as well as an Islamic state because of the great contributions of the Turks to Islam, which found an expression in the equality of Turk and Muslim.

On the social level, for Muslim populations, ethnic identity was not totally wiped out but reduced to secondary importance. Religion-based identification, as in the example of the Empire, provides a wide-ranging participation, but also a loose one at the same time. Religion functioning as an umbrella identification hosts different cultures, ethnicities, traditions, e.g., and it aims to transform these attachments into its own concepts. In this sense, religion is comprehensive. While religion boasts the numbers of its members, the priority of nationalism is one of its qualities. Thus, nationalism is not comprehensive but selective; meaning, it limits its characteristics as much as it can. It prefers one ethnicity, one religion, one culture, one language rather than two.

To return to the Ottoman case, when the influence of nationalism began to threaten the Empire’s social and political order, the administration came up with the ideology of Ottomanism. As a pluralist nationalism, Ottomanism attempted to identify its

people based on citizenship regardless of race and religion, and it saw a powerful reaction to this from intellectuals. Their reaction was not based on ethnicity but religion, namely Islam. They referred to the principle of equality in Sharia, saying that non-Muslims cannot have the same rights as Muslims do. Following Ottomanism, Abdulhamid II's Islamism, again, sat on religious principles for identity creation. Even the Young Turk movement was not founded as an ethnic-nationalist ideology since the Empire still accommodated non-Turk Muslim populations.

As Ottoman and Armenian cases within the context of the formation process of nationalism demonstrate, religion played a major role in the formation of identity. Although the relation between ethnicity and religion has a dual characteristic, religion in the Ottoman case is dominant. However, in the Armenian case, religion is ethnicized. Thus, the social identity of both the Ottoman and Armenian peoples posits that the conflict between the Empire and the Armenians has a religious base, too, which cannot be ignored. First, putting forth this actuality, I can now examine how this religious base caused the mobilization of masses.

Territorial Affiliation of Religion and Nationalism

A given territory plays a major role in nationalistic discourses. Territory not only means belonging to a certain land, but also gains a “sacred” meaning and “becomes place of reverence and awe” in the creation of memories. Sacred lands turn into “fatherland” by the “sanctification of territory”.²⁰¹ In this context, the homeland, as Smith states, is sacred due to “the presence and activities of saints, prophets and sages.” The representation of

²⁰¹Anthony D. Smith, *Ethno-Symbolism and Nationalism: A Cultural Approach* (London & New York: Routledge, 2009), 94.

the fatherland concept for Armenians finds an explanation in the same way. In Smith's words, "St Gregory's missions to the various provinces of the kingdom of Armenia endowed them with a novel sanctity, binding them together as a union of Christians."²⁰² In this sense, Khrimian's travels to Ararat, Echmiadzin, Jerusalem, Cilicia, and his observations of these places, carried a patriotic mission. In so doing, he emphasized the importance of places in terms of religious and historical perspectives, and also aimed to acquaint between his people with these places. The demonstration of the close relation between religion and territory appeared in Khrimian's personality. Thus, Lynch would say for Khiriman that "with him religion and patriotism [became] almost interchangeable terms."²⁰³

In the Ottoman Empire, the lack of ethnic sentiments becomes obvious in the sense of territory. Until the nineteenth century, there was no specific term evoking religious connotations, such as fatherland. With the influence of the French Revolution in the political sphere, the term *vatan* was first used to mean *patrie* in the late eighteenth century.²⁰⁴ While in classical Arabic *watan* (*vatan* in Turkish) means "one's place of birth or residence," it acquired the meaning of *fatherland* through the politicization of religion in the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire. The new usage of the word *watan* meant 'the land conquered and then administrated by Muslims.' As Lewis notes, "the word *watan*, with derivatives for 'patriot' and 'patriotism,' passed into common use as part of the new nationalist terminology, and a number of older terms, part of the political

²⁰²Ibid.

²⁰³H. F. B. Lynch, *Armenia: Travels and Studies*, Vol. 1, (Beirut: Khayats, 2nd edn, 1967), 237.

²⁰⁴Bernard Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 40.

languages of Islam, began to acquire new meanings.”²⁰⁵ Thus, as much as the holy places of Islam are sacred, the lands gained by shedding blood and giving martyr are also somehow sacred in the same way. The religious expression *vatan* in the socio-politic arena was based on a Hadith reading as “hubbu’l-watan mine’l-iman” (the love of fatherland is a part of faith). In the Ottoman case, the lack of ethnic identification caused the politicization of religion in order to motivate people for the sake of *sacredness*, as sanctifying the lands by referring to Islamic sources.

As a result of the overlap of two different entities in the same territory sanctified with their own perceptions, any activities or conflicts based on the land, whether originating from economic reasons or not, potentially found religious expressions. The existence of religious places and the mythicized belonging to the land deeply influenced the collective memories of the people.²⁰⁶ In this context, the relocation process of the Ottoman Empire thus meant that Armenians were exiled from their ancestral fatherland in which they had their symbolic churches, such as Echmiadzin to Jerusalem.

Sanctifying a territory requires people to sacrifice themselves for the land in the framework of nationalism. As Kathryn McClymond puts, “the seemingly timeless and transcendent authority of sacrifice is often used as a tool for creating national identity and loyalty.”²⁰⁷ Without excluding or reducing the influence of social and economic reasons of the conflict, as I argued, it is necessary to consider how nationalism created its characteristics derived from religious language, and how it politicized this religious language for the motivation of common people through religious authorities.

²⁰⁵Ibid., 40.

²⁰⁶Smith, *Ethno-Symbolism*, 95.

²⁰⁷Kathryn McClymond, *Beyond Sacred Violence* (Maryland: The John Hopkins University Press, 2008), 160.

Mobilization of Masses: Sacrifice Concept and Violence

Due to the characteristics of both Turkish and Armenian nationalisms, religion played a major role in the conflict on the territorial level. The conflict was based on several reasons, such as economic and socio-politic ones. However, what made the conflict result in tragedy were not the reasons but the common people's perception of these reasons; in other words, how the common people were motivated in order to achieve their goals. For the Ottoman people, threat perception was based on their social, political, economic, and territorial conditions within their *vatan* as a result of the national independence movements of non-Muslim *millet*s. The struggle of Armenians for their independence from the Ottoman Empire by claiming the region as their *fatherland* was a threat directed at the Ottoman people of the region. The goal of Muslim population was to keep territorial integrity in order to maintain their presence in the region.

Conversely, the Armenians perceived a threat from the Ottoman administration toward their economic and social positions. While Christian *millet*s were succeeding in attaining their independence one after another from the Ottoman Empire, only Armenians among the Christian communities in the 1910 onwards and the Jews could not achieve its independence. Thus, the goal of the Armenian nationalism was to build an independent, ethnic-Armenian nation-state on its ancestral fatherland within the Ottoman Empire.

At this point, I argue that the integration of nationalist discourses with religious language provided strong motivation for peoples' struggles. Sheikhs and the 'ulama of the Empire, on one hand, and the Armenian clergy, on the other, accelerated peoples' feelings of fighting on account of their *sacred* goals. A religious narrative has the potential to motivate people by touching their feelings. This motivation mostly appears in

the form of one sacrificing everything, including one's life. Ivan Strenski, in his study of the concept of sacrifice in France in the nineteenth century, discusses how religious notions, especially the concept sacrifice, are used in politics as tools to motivate people to kill and die for the country.²⁰⁸

In the mobilization of the masses, religion easily penetrates the feelings of people through social networking. McClymond writes that “[t]he successful use of sacrificial language in public discourse infuses certain civil and national activities with religious authority.”²⁰⁹ According to McClymond, “multivalent notion of sacrifice, then, can be an effective tool for reinforcing and representing national as well as religious identity.”²¹⁰ In Smith's words,

it is not sacrifice per se, but a powerful sense of national destiny grounded in sacrifice” that “has repeatedly helped to mobilize the citizens for defense of homeland, inspired heroic myths of battle and of the noble death of the patriot-warrior, and has sought permanent expression through the commemoration of their actions in art and monumental sculptures that enfold the members of the nation and summon them to fulfill that destiny for which their compatriots laid down their lives.”²¹¹

Khrimian, again, appears in the mobilization of the masses with his writings, sermons, speeches, journals, and educational activities that were decorated with nationalistic discourses. Voluntarily performing as a teacher in Istanbul, establishing theology schools in Van and Mush, and printing journals first in Van and then in Mush provided Khrimian with influential communication with the masses. Although the schools he established were theology schools, the content of his teachings was centered

²⁰⁸Ivan Strenski, *Contesting Sacrifice: Religion, Nationalism, and Social Thought in France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 9.

²⁰⁹McClymond, *Beyond Sacred Violence*, 160.

²¹⁰*Ibid.*, 163.

²¹¹Smith, *Ethno-Symbolism*, 97-98.

on nationalistic and patriotic figures. It is worth noting that the students of his theology schools became the forerunners of Armenian revolutionary movements.²¹² Another significant contribution of Khrimian in the mobilization of the masses was the three-volume work of *Armenology*, which Khrimian had his cousin Khoren Khrimian prepare.²¹³ Khrimian, he himself being a son of a peasant family, focused on how to mobilize the common people. Thus, his journals utilized vernacular language in order to awaken the national and patriotic consciousness of the peasantry. The result of Khrimian's activities led Van to be "the cradle of the national movement and one of the symbols of the Armenian cultural rebirth."²¹⁴

In the Ottoman case, it is hard to come across a figure similar to Khrimian. The administering of education by local 'ulama, the religious characteristics of state policies, and the social unity of the *Ummah* principle allowed religious discourses to be carried out. Thus, the mobilization of the masses in the Ottoman case was easier than it was in the Armenian one. In addition to religious institutions, settled state institutions had the advantage of being able to reach people. For instance, the position of Sheikh-ul-Islam was a powerful institution among the Muslim population since it issued *fetvas*; for example, the well-known "Ottoman Proclamation of Jihad in 1914" called Muslim people to fight against infidels all over the world.²¹⁵

The mobilization of masses through religious discourses for nationalist demands naturally leads to the emergence of violence. Once the emotions of masses are directed at achieving their nationalistic goals, concrete reasons trigger the emergence of violence.

²¹²Perroomian, "Heritage of Van," 139.

²¹³Ibid.

²¹⁴Ter Minaassian, "Van 1915," 223.

²¹⁵Quoted in Karpat, *Politicization of Islam*, 370.

For example, Christopher Dandeker writes, “[w]hen social and economic disadvantages (real or perceived) are linked closely with regional and ethnic divisions and sources identity, then violent conflict can ensue...”²¹⁶

Returning to the Armenian case, Khrimian’s sermon, the Ladle Paper, calling Armenians to be armed after the Berlin Congress, is an appropriate example of the emergence of violence. After praising the struggles of other non-Muslim nations for their independence, Khrimian spoke to his people:

...As you know, upon the decision of Patriarch Nersess and the National Assembly, we went to Berlin to present the Armenian Case to the great powers of the Congress. We had great hopes that the Congress would bring peace to the world and liberation to the small and oppressed nations, among which we count ourselves.

...People of Armenia, of course you understand well what the gun could have done and can do. And so, dear and blessed Armenians, when you return to the Fatherland, to your relatives and friends, take weapons, take weapons and again weapons. People, above all, place the hope of your liberation on yourself. Use your brain and your fist! Man must work for himself in order to be saved.²¹⁷

His speech carries religious motives decorated with nationalistic goals that promoted violence. Moreover, as Kedourie argues, politicized religion in the account of nationalism creates a legitimacy and justification for the use of violence and terror by provoking peoples “atavistic emotions.”²¹⁸

As these specific examples demonstrate, the conflict carries religious figures, attachments, and discourses than many scholars have ignored or disregarded. Of course, to look at the conflict from a religious perspective does not mean that it can be understood only in a religious framework or reduced to a religious conflict. The

²¹⁶Christopher Dandeker, “Nationalism, Nation-States, and Violence at the End of Twentieth Century: A Sociological View” in *Nationalism and Violence*, ed. Christopher Dandeker, (New Brunswick, USA: Transaction Publishers, 1998), 29.

²¹⁷<http://armenianhouse.org/khrimyan-hayrik/loving-father.html>

²¹⁸For further discussion, see Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism in Asia and Africa* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968).

examination of nationalism in Turkish and Armenian cases shows that religion played the major role in their formation. The interaction of religion and politicization emerged as a new concept that has caused many social and political transformations. Just as I have discussed that the politicization of religion facilitated the motivation and mobilization of masses, Smith writes,

[w]hile nationalisms may invoke or ally themselves with particular religious traditions, the tension between them often produces a number of transformations characteristic of the modern world which contributes to the sense of flux and mass instability. Among these mass transformations is the oft-noted politicisation of religion, in which traditional motifs are endowed with new political significance.²¹⁹

To conclude, I believe that, in addition to economic, politic, and social dimensions of the conflict, the religious facet of the conflict needs to be studied. While religion and nationalism were strongly affiliated with each other in both Ottoman and Armenian cases, it is important to consider the religious elements which created social transformation and mobilization. Moreover, I argue that nationalism owes its success to religion by using it as a tool for reaching people. Nationalism did not preclude the place of religion in social life, but

[r]eligion, far from being squeezed out of the frame of a secularizing modernity, re-emerges within it in new guises. Its legacies are not buried and forgotten, rather they are transmuted in and by nationalism. For, not only are specific motifs, symbols, and traditions of earlier world religions taken over and used by nationalists, at the official and popular levels; nationalism itself, through its conception of the nation as a sacred communion, with its own doctrines, texts, liturgies, ceremonies, churches, and priests becomes a novel kind of anthropocentric, intra-historical, and political 'religion', a (rival or allied) functional equivalent of the old, transhistorical religions, but one that like them

²¹⁹Anthony D. Smith, "The 'Sacred' Dimension of Nationalism," *Millennium - Journal of International Studies* (2000, 29), 799.

fulfils many of the same collective functions through analogous rituals, myths, and symbols.²²⁰

Thus, even social and economic reasons can cause the emergence of conflict; their origins lay deep within the sacred perceptions of a society. I do not think that when a land, either a farmland or fatherland, is taken by force, the reaction of the people will be the same. Thus, sanctification and sacrifice create sacredness in social memory. Even though nationalism is a modern and a secular concept, it uses religious roots, memories, and myths and politicizes them for its own benefits, as was seen in my examination of the conflict between Turkish and Armenian nationalisms. As Christopher Dandeker states, “...[i]n order to achieve the goals of nationalism—some form of autonomy for the nation, if not independence—cultural nationalism has to become conjoined with, or become transformed into, political nationalism.”²²¹ Thus, the conflict was not only the result of the clash of two nationalisms in the same territory, but also a result of a clash between two different religions, cultures, arts, histories, and myths that were politicized through nationalist discourses.

²²⁰Ibid., 811.

²²¹Dandeker, “Nationalism, Nation-States, 26.

CONCLUSION

The examination of Turkish and Armenian nationalisms provides an understanding of the conflict between the Ottoman Empire and the Armenians. In this research, I go further and examine the two nationalisms from a religious perspective in order to demonstrate the influence of religions in the formation of nationalisms, and its particular impact on the events of 1915. Instead of focusing on the results of these events, I focus on the reasons for which these events are deeply rooted in an ecclesiastic background. The aim of this research is to demonstrate that, in addition to economic, social, and political reasons, an approach to these events can be assumed that emphasizes religious aspects.

The first two chapters have examined the formation of nationalism and its relation to religion in the cases of Turkish and Armenian nationalisms. Chapter I discusses how the relatively delayed emergence of nationalism as a state ideology in the Ottoman Empire was based on the multiethnic and multireligious character of the *millet* system. The French Revolution and its aftermath in the Balkans forced the Ottoman administration to take measures—*Tanzimat* and *Islahat Fermanları*—to avoid the dissolution of the Empire. Thus, instead of ethnic or religious identification, the Ottoman administration attempted to identify its subjects as *Osmanlı* (Ottoman) by providing citizenship with equal rights irrespective of religion and race. The first attempt to reach this end came from the Ottoman bureaucracy which argued that the superiority of being Muslim (*Millet-i Hakime*) was an indispensable motto in terms of Sharia.

Following Ottomanism, Abdulhamid II (1876-1908) conducted a religious version of identification named Islamism, defending the unity of Muslims not only within but also outside of the Empire. This marked the first instance of the politicization of Islam as an official discourse. Abdulhamid II aimed to keep non-Turkish Muslims away from the influence of nationalism. There was some success if the territorial integrity of the Muslim population is considered. However, the Islamist discourse unavoidably brought an absolutism that led to the strengthening of national feelings among the non-Muslim elements of the Empire, such as those of the Armenians. It was at the reign of Abdulhamid II that the Armenian question first reached its peak. Nonetheless, the absolutism of Abdulhamid II should be read in the context of the non-Turkish Muslim population. It was the reason for which Abdulhamid II did not allow the discussing and spreading of Turkish nationalism as an alternative identification that threatened the social base of the Muslim population. Yet, there were organizations outside the Empire developing the ideology of Turkish nationalism.

The Young Turk movement, the most well-known nationalist organization, overthrew Abdulhamid II and came to power in 1908 as a political party titled *İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti* (Committee of Union and Progress). Although the hierarchy of the movement consisted of Turkish nationalist intellectuals and activists, the movement hosted Islamists, Ottomanists, and Turanists, and also groups opposing the absolutism of the Sultan, such as the Armenian Revolutionary Federation Party, *Dashnak*. Yusuf Akçura and Ziya Gökalp, the ideologues of modern Turkish nationalism, were also in touch with the movement.

However, the end of absolutism resulted in the explosion of Turkish nationalist

discourses. The CUP government encountered the Balkan Wars of 1912-13, the events of 1915, and WWI (1914-1918). Thus, the CUP had to be active mostly in the field of war rather than intellectual and political spheres. Since Turkish nationalism was not an ethnic and systematic discourse, it had to remain an elite movement. This, of course, had other social reasons: the migration of the Muslim population from the Balkans and Caucasia after the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78, the presence of the multiethnic Muslim population in the Eastern region of the Empire, and the failure to deliver nationalistic ideas to the common people via elite and local notables, the sheikhs and ‘ulama.

Here, two reasons are worth mentioning in order to clarify the failed delivery of nationalism. First, education was still administered in local circles that centered on religious teachings and was conducted by the local ‘ulama. So, there was limited access to external local scholarship. Second, students who went to Europe to receive their education preferred to stay in Istanbul, the intellectual center of the Empire, rather than return to their homes. Therefore, the Sheikhs were in control of the authority. The sheikhs gained this power with Abdulhamid II’s support in order to avoid the rebellions of the Kurdish notables who lost power after the centralization of the Empire. Despite these means, there would be a few low-key, local Kurdish rebellions during the reign of Abdulhamid II, but the important ones would not appear until after the Republic, namely the *Şeyh Said* (1925), *Ağrı* (1930), and *Dersim* (1937-1938) rebellions.

There were also significant contributions made by the local ‘ulama and sheikhs in order to encourage and organize people in the “holy” war against infidels during WWI and the War of Independence. As an example, a Kurdish ‘ulama, Said Nursi, was a forerunner in this kind of initiative. With Kurdish ethnicity, he never advocated Kurdish

nationalism; moreover, he praised the Turkish nation for its glorious services to Islam.²²² According to Said Nursi, an identity should have been constructed through religion rather than a nation.²²³ Being both Kurdish and Muslim, he concentrated on the concept of the *vatan* in a religious way, not in a national or an ethnic one. He educated his students according to this principle; moreover, he voluntarily joined the Ottoman army during WWI and fought against the Armenians.²²⁴

In this environment, Islam kept its dominance and withheld its power to motivate people in rural areas regardless of their ethnicity. The language derived from Islamic teachings, such as *vatan*, *cihad*, *şehit*, and *gazi*, and the language inherited from Turkish culture, such as *ocak* and *devlet baba*, played a significant role in the defense of the lands of both the individual and the *vatan*.

On the other hand, the Armenian case yields similar results. The separation of Armenian and Greek Churches in the fourth century and the territory compressed by Byzantium, Persian, and later Turkish states created a “self-isolation” image among Armenians. This image transformed into a kind of identity for Armenians since the Armenian Church administered only to the Armenian people or, more specifically, only to Armenian people affiliated with the Church. Thus, many scholars of Armenian history call “a national Church” one of the defining characteristics of the Church. By establishing their roots in the Urartians and labeling the first officially Christian society, Armenians praised their land and their religion. This embodied religious territoriality experienced a nationalistic phase after the French Revolution via the translations and publications of the

²²²Said Nursi, *Tarihçe-i Hayat*, 94.

²²³*Ibid.*, 98.

²²⁴*Ibid.*, 104.

Diaspora. The early phrase of nationalism led to a national awakening. However, the return of Armenian students with a Western education activated Armenian nationalism at a political level within the Empire in the second half of the nineteenth century.

The Patriarchate of Istanbul was the head of the Armenian *millet* in terms of their religious representation in the eyes of the Ottoman sultans. In social and economic contexts, they were allowed to make trade, but, like other non-Muslim millets, they had to pay taxes in return for being exempt from military services. The non-Muslim millets were also not welcomed to hold positions at administrative levels. However, the Armenians had some privileges such as taking place in the bureaucracy and having close relations with the administrative class. In these privileges, the role of the *Amira* class was significant. The *Amira* class, due to its close relations with the sultans, was able to control the Patriarchate, too.

The power of the *Amira* class over the Patriarchate caused a conflict with the other economic class, *Esnaf*. Interestingly, the return of students from Europe and the disturbance of the *Esnaf* class, with the power of the *Amira* class, coincided at the same time. The students provoked the Armenians of Istanbul by demanding their own *Nizamname* (Armenian National Constitution), which would be accepted in 1860 and declared in 1863. This was also one of the turning points in the relations of the Ottomans and Armenians, since the *Amira* class lost its power over the Patriarchate and indirectly over the Armenians; thus, the Ottoman administration also lost its control over the Armenians. During these same years, Armenian rebellions began to emerge in Anatolia. The rebellions of Zeitun (1862), Van (1862), Erzurum (1863), and Mush (1864) were the igniters of future rebellions of Armenians against the Empire.

Bringing into balance the power of the Patriarchate of Istanbul, the Church's attitude toward nationalism gained acceleration. It was at this moment that the nationalist religious leaders appeared in the field as well. An excellent example of this combined characteristic was Mkrdich Khrimian, who would later become the Patriarch of Istanbul. This religio-nationalist movement was delivered mostly through religious figures by putting emphasis on revolutionary activities, including violent ones. In this sense, Khiriman's speech at the Berlin Congress was quite important for showing the Armenians' transformation into a revolutionary method.

The delivery of this new method by the religious leaders also provided a wide distribution of religio-nationalistic ideas among the common Armenians living in rural areas. Coming from a rural area himself, Khrimian was able to manipulate the common people; he gave priority to education by establishing schools in Armenian-populated regions, vernacularized publications, sermons, lectures in schools, and poems. The observations he made during his travels to regions that had considerable historical, cultural, and religious importance, such as Echmiadzin, Ararat, and later Jerusalem and Cilicia, strengthened his patriotic and religious feelings. His election to the Patriarchate of Istanbul was the result of his activities among the Armenians. His election also indicated that the *Amira* class and the Empire lost power over the Armenians.

From an examination of both cases, there are inferences of which some are similar and are some not. Religion in both cases is the primary social attachment. The phrases of Turkish nationalism indicate that, in the context of social integrity, there was no way to create a society without Islam. The objections of the Young Ottomanists to the Tanzimat Reforms, the Islamism policy of Abdulhamid II, and debates over the essence of the

Turkish nationalism in terms of exclusionary or inclusionary frameworks in the consideration of the non-Turkish Muslim elements originated from Islam. So, Islam played a significant role at both transitional and formational levels of Turkish nationalism. However, its role was not always as a feeder but also as a receiver, which means that, as much as Islam contributed to the formation of Turkish nationalism, Turkish nationalism transformed Islam into a nationalistic religion as well. However, besides this dual interaction, Islam was politicized by the state-authority. The attempts to change the nature of religion in terms of its social perception, just as *Tanzimat* and *Islahat Fermanları* had reduced its role or Abdulhamid II's Islamism policy excluded "others," created social disorder in a multiethnic empire. While the *Tanzimat* and *Islahat Fermanları* brought an equal citizenship status to all subjects regardless of religion and race, the Young Ottomans worked to ensure that the equality of Muslims and non-Muslims would not be accepted according to Sharia. On the other hand, Islamism conducted exclusionary politics against non-Muslim communities, especially the Armenians. These exclusionary politics also allowed the Armenians and the CUP to cooperate against Abdulhamid II's absolutism.

Following the disposition of Abdulhamid II, the CUP administration was faced with the similar problems. The failure to deliver ideas to the common people living in rural areas and wars made it such that Islam continued to be the main social boundary between the different ethnic-based Muslim people of the Empire. Especially in the Eastern region of the Empire, the Kurd- and Circassian-populated provinces, the sheikhs and 'ulama uttered religious discourses in order to hold social integrity.

Although the members were called "Young Turks," the movement consisted of

groups that had different origins in terms of ideologies and ethnicities. The common point among the groups was to oppose the regime; thus, it was a pragmatic organization expecting benefits with the deposition of the Sultan. Because of this pragmatic approach and the different ethnic origins of its members, the Young Turk movement could not present a systematic ideology of Turkish nationalism.

Turning back to the Armenian case, the conclusion of the power struggle over the Patriarchate in favor of nationalist-revolutionist Armenians accelerated revolutionary movements within the Empire. The “self-isolated” characteristic of the Armenian Church and its people facilitated nationalism in gaining acceptance among them. In addition to the increasing number of revolts by Armenians within the Empire, several revolutionary organizations were established. The first of these organizations, the Union of Salvation, aimed for “self-protection” and was founded in 1872 in Van. This was where Khrimian built the first publishing house in 1855.²²⁵ Here, it is worth mentioning a declaration given by one of the organization’s spokesmen and highlighting one of the organization’s letters in order to demonstrate how the nationalistic and religious discourses were combined:

The declaration reads,

“... [g]one is our honor; our **churches** have been violated; they have kidnapped our brides and our youth; they take away our rights and try to exterminate our **nation** ... let us find a way of **salvation** ... if not, we will soon lose everything.”

And the letter says,

In order to save ourselves from these **evils (Ottomans)**, we are prepared to follow you even if we must **shed blood or die**. We are ready to go wherever there is hope for our **salvation**.

If the alternative to our present condition is to become **Russified**, let us **Russified**

²²⁵Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary*, 80.

together; if it is to be emigration, let us emigrate; if we are to die, let us die; but let us be freed. This is our desire.²²⁶

As these passages demonstrate, there are two points that need further discussion. The first point is that the use of religious language (salvation and evil), religious duty (shed blood or die), and places (church) are steeped in nationalistic style. Secondly, for Armenians who desire freedom, “to become Russified” is more acceptable than becoming Ottomanized. By saying this, there is also a religious choice between Islam and Christianity.

Another similar text was produced by Khrimian in the Berlin Congress. In his speech, he emulated the independence struggles of Balkan peoples and spoke of the necessity of his people to be armed in order to attain an “Independent Armenia”. This speech was also emphasized with nationalistic and religious language.

As the Armenian case indicates, there is a process of politicization of religion conducted mostly by religious leaders. The politicization process of the “national” Armenian Church started with the influence of nationalism. In other words, the already nationalistic Church became active in politics, and it did this by expressing revolutionary ideas and encouraging violence, if required.

An outcome of the examination demonstrates that, while Turkish nationalism remained an elite debate in 1910s, Armenian nationalism completed its formation around the second half of the nineteenth century and found acceptance from laymen. The delay of the development of Turkish nationalism can be explained within the multiethnic imperial structure, meaning the Empire still had non-Turkish and non-Muslim subjects under its sovereignty; thus, it was not able to shape ethno-national policies. Nevertheless,

²²⁶Ibid., 80-81 (*Emphases added*).

these policies were shaped in order to save the day, not to build the future. The Armenian case, on the other hand, has uniqueness in terms of the relationship between the Armenian Church and its people. Representing a single nation, “the Church identified with the national aspirations of its people.”²²⁷

The analysis of the Turkish and Armenian nationalisms also shows that both nationalisms engage religious figures, symbols, and language. This engagement in the Armenian nationalism is not clear because of the Church’s dual commitment to religious and political representation. However, in the Turkish case, Islam kept its priority in identification although the word *Türk* meant ‘Muslim’ in many cases. The final period of the Ottoman Empire proved that Islam was still a social tie between various ethnic people of the Empire, such as Kurds and Circassians.

The third and relatively more important outcome of the examination is based on the interaction of nationalism and religion. The already existing religious backgrounds in both cases were transformed into nationalized political versions. The Armenian Church was convenient for this change because of its national characteristic. However, the Church’s goading of the people toward revolutionary and armed activities triggered an increase in violence. In a parallel way, Abdulhamid II’s Islamism, a political expression of religion, concluded with an absolutism that excluded non-Muslim communities. The increase in Armenian revolts during the reign of Abdulhamid II should be understood in this framework. There was a conflict that emerged at the moment of the politicization process of religions with nationalistic expressions.

In a general, nationalistic understanding, one can basically define the conflict as

²²⁷Chakmakjian, *Armenian Christology*, 103.

the existence of two nationalisms on the same land. This land is considered fatherland according to Armenian nationalistic view. The Armenians' self-attachment to the Urartians in their mythicized national history should be understood in compliance with this view. The Echmiadzin Church—the symbolic center of the Armenian Church—and Mount Ararat were a couple of examples of the demonstration of their territorial belonging. In contrast to the Armenian case, the land gains meaning with its *feth* (conquest) by Muslim conquerors and becomes *vatan* in Islamic perception. During the Tanzimat Era, the Young Ottomans emphasized the concept *vatan* in a patriotic expression to strengthen the loyalty of the people to the Empire. Instead of the word *yurt*, the use of *vatan* also carries a religious meaning which is a combination of Islam and the land, literally Islamic land. This concept is expressed in the saying *Vatan toprağı kutsaldır!* (The land of vatan is holy!).

Religions are suitable for transformation in accordance with the needs of people. The expression or interpretation of religions is able to be modified in social or political contexts. Nationalism, as a secular ideology, transformed Islam into a Turkish version and Christianity to an Armenian version. This change, however, did not occur in a single direction. Religions also influenced the expression of nationalism with their sacred languages, symbols, and figures. Thus, there was interaction between nationalism and religion, which easily mobilized people toward violence. To improve our judgments and understanding of the events of 1915, one has to consider the impact of religions or, rather, the politicization of religions towards a nationalistic version in the motivation and mobilization of people.

APPENDIX

THE PAPER LADLE (1878)

Blessed and beloved Armenians: Now, you have all perked up your ears, impatiently and anxiously waiting to hear what sort of news Khirimian Hayrig has brought us from the Berlin Congress, and what will he say about Article 61 which the powerful governments of the world have bestowed upon the Armenian provinces. Listen carefully to what I am about to say. Grasp the profound meaning of my words and then go and contemplate on my message.

As you know, upon the decision of Patriarch Nersess and the National Assembly, we went to Berlin to present the Armenian Case to the great powers of the Congress. We had great hopes that the Congress would bring peace to the world and liberation to the small and oppressed nations, among which we count ourselves.

The Congress convened, the statesmen of the great powers of the world gathered around diplomatic tables covered with green cloth. And we, the small and suppressed nations waited outside the Congress. In the middle of the Congress, upon a table covered with green cloth was placed a large bowl of heriseh* from which large and small nations and governments would draw their portion.

*Heriseh is a kind of thick and pasty stew-like meal.

Some of the participants pulled to the East, some pulled to the West, and after long debates, in order, one by one, they called the representatives of the small nations [into the meeting]. The Bulgarian entered first, then Serbian and the Gharadaghian. The rattling of the swords hanging from their sides attracted the attention of the assembly.

After speaking for some while, these three, pulled out their swords, as if ladles made of iron, and dipped into the bowl, took their portion of heriseh and proudly and boldly departed.

It was now the turn of the Armenian delegate. I drew near with the paper petition from the National Assembly, presented it and asked that they fill my plate too with heriseh. Then, the officials standing before the bowl asked me, "Where is your iron ladle? It is true that we are serving heriseh here, but he who does not have an iron ladle cannot draw from it. Listen up. In the future, if this heriseh is distributed, do not come without a ladle or you will return empty handed.

Dear Armenian people. Could I have dipped my paper ladle in the heriseh? It would have become wet and stayed there. There, where guns talk and swords make noise, what significance do appeals and petitions have?

And I saw next to the Gharadaghian, the Bulgarian and other delegates, several brave [men], blood dripping from the swords hanging at their sides. I then turned my head, as if I was looking for the brave men from Zeitoon, Sasoon, Shadakh and other mountainous areas. But where were they? People of Armenia, tell me, where were those brave souls?

Should not one or two of them have been next to me, so that showing their bloody swords to the members of Congress I could have exclaimed, "Look, HERE ARE MY

IRON LADLES! They are here, ready!" But alas, all I had was a paper petition, which got wet in the heriseh and we returned empty handed. Truly, had they compared me with the delegates of the Congress, I was taller, my facial features were more attractive. But to what avail? In my hand was placed a piece of paper and not a sword. For this reason we were deprived of the heriseh. In spite of all, in view of the future, going to the Congress of Berlin was not useless.

People of Armenia, of course you understand well what the gun could have done and can do. And so, dear and blessed Armenians, when you return to the Fatherland, to your relatives and friends, take weapons, take weapons and again weapons. People, above all, place the hope of your liberation on yourself. Use your brain and your fist! Man must work for himself in order to be saved.²²⁸

²²⁸<http://armenianhouse.org/khrimyan-hayrik/loving-father.html>

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Acuff, M. Jonathan. "One Nation Under God: Nationalism, Religion, and Collective Violence" *Paper presented at the annual meeting of the ISA's 49th Annual Convention, Bridging Multiple Divides, Hilton San Francisco, San Francisco, CA, USA, Mar 26, 2008.* http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p253667_index.html. A somewhat different version of this essay will appear in Jeffrey Ross ed., *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Violence*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, December, 2010.

Ahmad, Feroz. *The Young Turks*. London: Oxford University Press, 1969.

Akçura, Yusuf. *Üç Tarz-ı Siyaset (Three Ways of Politics)*. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1976.

Arai, Masami. *Turkish Nationalism in the Young Turk Era*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992.

Artinian, Vartan. *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Ermeni Anayasası'nın Doğuşu 1839-1863 (The Emergence of Armenian Constitution in the Ottoman State 1839-1863)*. Istanbul: Aras Yayıncılık, 2004.

Asad, Muhammad. *The Message of the Qur'an*. Istanbul: İşaret Yayınları, 2006.

Atamian, Sarkis. *The Armenian Community: The Historical Development of a Social and Ideological Conflict*. New York: Philosophical Library, 1955.

Bardakjian, Kevork B. *A Reference Guide to Modern Armenian Literature, 1500-1920*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2000.

Barsoumian, Hagop. "The Dual Role of the Armenian *Amira* Class within the Ottoman Government and the Armenian Millet 1750-1850," in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: the Functioning of a Plural Society* (vol. 1: the Central Lands), eds. Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis. New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1982.

Berkes, Niyazi. *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*. Montreal: McGill Press, 1964.

Berkes, Niyazi. "Translator's Introduction," in Ziya Gökalp, *Turkish Nationalism and Western Civilization: Selected Essays of Ziya Gökalp*, trans. and ed. Niyazi Berkes. New York: Columbia University Press, 1959.

Chakmakjian, Hagop A. *Armenian Christology and Evangelization of Islam*.

Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965.

Dandeker, Christopher. "Nationalism, Nation-States, and Violence at the End of Twentieth Century: A Sociological View." in *Nationalism and Violence*, ed. Christopher Dandeker, New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1998.

Davison, Roderic H. "Turkish Attitudes Concerning Christian-Muslim Equality in the Nineteenth Century." *The American Historical Review*, 59, No. 4 (Jul., 1954): 844-864.

Demirel, Muammer. "Rusya'nın Ermeni Meselesine Etkisi (The Impact of Russia to the Armenian Question)" in *Dünden Bugüne Türk Ermeni İlişkileri (Turkish-Armenian Relations: From Past to Present)*, eds. İdris Bal and Mustafa Cufalı. Ankara: Lalezar Kitabevi, 2006.

Durkheim, Emile. *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. Translated by Joseph Ward Stein. New York: Free Press, 1915.

Eliot, Sir Charles. *Turkey in Europe*. London: Edward Arnold, 1908.

Fendoğlu, H. Tahsin. "Türk Osmanlı ABD İlişkileri Bağlamında Ermeni Sorunu (The Armenian Question in the Context of Turkish Ottoman and US Relations)" in *Dünden Bugüne Türk Ermeni İlişkileri (Turkish-Armenian Relations: From Past to Present)*, eds. İdris Bal and Mustafa Cufalı. Ankara: Lalezar Kitabevi, 2006.

Gellner, Ernest. *Nations and Nationalism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983.

Gillard, David, ed. *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print: The Near and Middle East 1856-1914*, Vol. 1-8, N.A.: University Publications of America, 1984.

Gökalp, Ziya. *Türkçülüğün Esasları (The Principles of Turkism)*. Istanbul: Varlık Yayınları, 5th edn., 1963.

Gökalp, Ziya. *Türkleşmek, İslamlaşmak, Muasırlaşmak (To Become Turk, Muslim, Civilized)*. Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1976.

Hanioğlu, M. Şükrü. "Notes on the Young Turks and the Freemasons, 1875-1908." *Middle Eastern Studies*, 25, No. 2 (Apr., 1989): 186-197.

Hanioğlu, M. Şükrü. *The Young Turks in Opposition*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.

Hanioğlu, M. Şükrü. "Turkism and the Young Turks, 1889-1908" in *Turkey beyond Nationalism: Toward Post-Nationalist Identities*. ed. Hans-Lukas Kieser. London & New York: I. B. Tauris, 2006.

Hastings, Adrian. *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and*

Nationalism. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Heyd, Uriel. *Foundations of Turkish Nationalism: the Life of Ziya Gökalp*. London: Luzac, 1950.

Hourani, Albert. *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*. London: Oxford University Press, 1970.

<http://armenianhouse.org/khrimyan-hayrik/loving-father.html>

https://ecf.dcd.uscourts.gov/cgi-bin/show_public_doc?2008cv1971-34

İrem, Nazım. "Turkish Conservative Modernism: Birth of a Nationalist Quest for Cultural Renewal." *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 34, No. 1 (Feb., 2002): 87-112.

Kakizaki, Masaki. "Review Essay: Ethnic Cleansing or Genocide?" *Middle East Critique*, 16, No 1, (2007): 85-92.

Karakaya, Recep. *Ermeni Meselesi: Kronoloji ve Kaynakça (The Armenian Question: Chronology and Bibliography)*. Istanbul: Gökkubbe Yayınları, 2005.

Karpat, Kemal H. *An Inquiry into the Social Foundations of Nationalism in the Ottoman State: from Social Estates to Classes, from Millets to Nations*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1973.

Karpat, Kemal H. *The Politicization of Islam: Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith, and Community in the Late Ottoman State*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Karpat, Kemal H. "The Transformation of the Ottoman State, 1789-1908." *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 3, No. 3 (Jul., 1972): 243-281.

Kayalı, Hasan. *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire: 1908-1918*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997.

Kedourie, Elie, ed. "Introduction" in *Nationalism in Asia and Africa*. New York: The World Publishing Company, 1970.

Kocaş, Sadi. *Tarih Boyunca Ermeniler ve Türk-Ermeni İlişkileri (Turkish-Armenian Relations through the History)*. Ankara: AltınokMatbaası, 1967.

Kushner, David. *The Rise of Turkish Nationalism 1876-1908*. London, Frank Cass, 1977.

Lewis, Bernard. "The Ottoman Empire and Its Aftermath." *Journal of Contemporary History*, 15, No. 1, Imperial Hangovers (Jan., 1980): 27-36.

Lewis, Bernard. *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*. 2nd edn., Oxford: Oxford Press, 1968.

Lewis, Bernard. *The Political Language of Islam*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998.

Lynch, H. F. B. *Armenia: Travels and Studies*, Vol. 1, Beirut: Khayats, 2nd edn, 1967.

Mantran, Robert. "Foreign Merchants and the Minorities in Istanbul during the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: the Functioning of a Plural Society* (vol. 1: the Central Lands), eds. Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis, New York: Holmes & Meier, 1982.

Mardin, Şerif. "19. yy'da Düşünce Akımları ve Osmanlı Devleti (Ideologies and the Ottoman State in the nineteenth Century)." *Tanzimat'tan Günümüze Türkiye Ansiklopedisi (The Encyclopedia of Turkey: from Tanzimat to Present)*, Vol. 2, Istanbul: İletişimYayınları, 1985.

Mardin, Şerif. *Ethnocentrism, Islam and the Development of Turkish Nationalism*. Ankara: Monograph, 1966.

Mardin, Şerif. *The Continuity and Change in the Ideas of the Young Turks*. Istanbul: Robert College School of Administration and Economics, 1969.

Mardin, Şerif. *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1962.

McClymond, Kathryn. *Beyond Sacred Violence*. Maryland: The John Hopkins University Press, 2008.

Mitchell, Claire. "The Religious Content of Ethnic Identities." *Sociology*, 40, No: 6, (2006): 1135-1152.

Nalbandian, Louise. *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement: The Development of Armenian Parties through the Nineteenth Century*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963.

Nursi, Said. *Tarihçe-i Hayat: Bediuzzaman Said Nursi'nin Hayatı (The Life Story: the Life of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi)*. Istanbul: ŞahdamarYayınları, 2008.

Papazian, Kapriel Serope. *Patriotism Perverted: a Discussion of the Deeds and the Misdeeds of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, the so-called Dashnagtzoutune*. Boston: Baikar Press, 1934.

Perroomian, Rubina. "The Heritage of Van Provincial Literature" in *Armenian Van/Vasputakan*. ed. Richard G. Hovannisian, California: Mazda, 2000.

Ramsaur, Ernest Edmondson. *The Young Turks: Prelude to the Revolution of 1908*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957.

Rutland, Peter. "Democracy and Nationalism in Armenia." *Europe-Asia Studies*, 46, No: 5 (1994): 839-861.

Shaginyan, Meriatta. "Khachatur Abovian," *Soviet Literature* Moscow, 1956, No. 1, 140. Quoted in Louise Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement: The Development of Armenian Parties through the Nineteenth Century*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963.

Şimşir, Bilal N. "Osmanlı Ermenileri ve Büyük Devletler (Ottoman Armenians and Great Powers)." in *Türk Tarihinde Ermeniler (Armenians in Turkish History)*, Izmir: Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi, 1983.

Smith, Anthony D. *Ethno-Symbolism and Nationalism: A Cultural Approach*. London & New York: Routledge, 2009.

Smith, Anthony D. *Myths and Memories of the Nation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Smith, Anthony D. *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1986.

Smith, Anthony D. "The 'Sacred' Dimension of Nationalism." *Millennium - Journal of International Studies* 29, No: 3 (December, 2000): 791-814.

Smith, Anthony D. *Theories of Nationalism*. 2nd edn., New York: Holmes & Meier, 1983.

Strenski, Ivan. *Contesting Sacrifice: Religion, Nationalism, and Social Thought in France*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002.

Taşpınar, Ömer. *Kurdish Nationalism and Political Islam in Turkey: Kemalist Identity in Transition*. New York: Routledge, 2005.

TerMinassian, Anahide. "Van 1915." in *Armenian Van/Vasporakan*. ed. Richard G. Hovannissian, California: Mazda, 2000.

Tololyan, Khachig. "Textual Nation: Poetry and Nationalism in Armenian Political Culture." in *Intellectuals and the Articulation of the Nation*. eds, Ronald Grigor Suny and Michael D. Kennedy. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1999.

Ülken, Hilmi Ziya. *Türkiyede Çağdaş Düşünce Tarihi (The History of Modern Thought in Turkey)*. Vol. II/II Konya: SelçukYayınları, 1966.

Uzun, Turgay. "Osmanlı Devleti'nde Toplumsal Yapı ve Ayrılıkçı Ermeni Hareketinin Doğuşu (Social Structure and the Emergence of Separatist Armenian Movement in the Ottoman State)." in *Dünden Bugüne Türk Ermeni İlişkileri (Turkish-*

Armenian Relations: From Past to Present). eds. İdris Bal and Mustafa Cufalı. Ankara: Lalezar Kitabevi, 2006.

Weiker, Walter F. "The Ottoman Bureaucracy: Modernization and Reform." *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 13, No. 3, Special Issue on Organizations and Social Development, (December, 1968): 451-470.

Yavuz, Fikrettin. "Ermeni Kimliği'nin İnşasında Bir Patrik Portresi: MıgırdıçKırımian." (Portrait of a Patriarch in the Building Armenian Identity: Mkrdich Khrimian.) *SBE Akademik İncelemeler Dergisi*, 2, No: 1, (2007): 257-289.

Yavuz, M. Hakan. "Nationalism and Islam: Yusuf Akçura and Üç Tarz-ı Siyaset." *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 4, No: 2, (1993), 175-207.

Zawadski, Paul. "Nationalism, Democracy and Religion." in *Revisiting Nationalism: Theories and Processes*, eds. Dieckhoff, Alain and Christophe Jaffrelot, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

Zurcher, Erik Jan. *The Unionist Factor: The Role of the Committee of Union and Progress in the Turkish National Movement, 1905-1926*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1984.